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Title: Persuasion

Author: Jane Austen

Release date: February 1, 1994 [eBook #105]

Most recently updated: September 10, 2023

Language: English

Credits: Sharon Partridge and Martin Ward

Revised by Richard Tonsing.

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Persuasion

by Jane Austen

(1818)

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CHAPTER I.

Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, was a man who,

for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there

he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed

one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by

contemplating the limited remnant of the earliest patents; there any

unwelcome sensations, arising from domestic affairs changed naturally

into pity and contempt as he turned over the almost endless creations

of the last century; and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he

could read his own history with an interest which never failed. This

was the page at which the favourite volume always opened:

“ELLIOT OF KELLYNCH HALL.

“Walter Elliot, born March 1, 1760, married, July 15, 1784, Elizabeth,

daughter of James Stevenson, Esq. of South Park, in the county of

Gloucester, by which lady (who died 1800) he has issue Elizabeth, born

June 1, 1785; Anne, born August 9, 1787; a still-born son, November 5,

1789; Mary, born November 20, 1791.”

Precisely such had the paragraph originally stood from the printer’s

hands; but Sir Walter had improved it by adding, for the information of

himself and his family, these words, after the date of Mary’s

birth—“Married, December 16, 1810, Charles, son and heir of Charles

Musgrove, Esq. of Uppercross, in the county of Somerset,” and by

inserting most accurately the day of the month on which he had lost his

wife.

Then followed the history and rise of the ancient and respectable

family, in the usual terms; how it had been first settled in Cheshire;

how mentioned in Dugdale, serving the office of high sheriff,

representing a borough in three successive parliaments, exertions of

loyalty, and dignity of baronet, in the first year of Charles II, with

all the Marys and Elizabeths they had married; forming altogether two

handsome duodecimo pages, and concluding with the arms and

motto:—“Principal seat, Kellynch Hall, in the county of Somerset,” and

Sir Walter’s handwriting again in this finale:—

“Heir presumptive, William Walter Elliot, Esq., great grandson of the

second Sir Walter.”

Vanity was the beginning and the end of Sir Walter Elliot’s character;

vanity of person and of situation. He had been remarkably handsome in

his youth; and, at fifty-four, was still a very fine man. Few women

could think more of their personal appearance than he did, nor could

the valet of any new made lord be more delighted with the place he held

in society. He considered the blessing of beauty as inferior only to

the blessing of a baronetcy; and the Sir Walter Elliot, who united

these gifts, was the constant object of his warmest respect and

devotion.

His good looks and his rank had one fair claim on his attachment; since

to them he must have owed a wife of very superior character to any

thing deserved by his own. Lady Elliot had been an excellent woman,

sensible and amiable; whose judgement and conduct, if they might be

pardoned the youthful infatuation which made her Lady Elliot, had never

required indulgence afterwards. She had humoured, or softened, or

concealed his failings, and promoted his real respectability for

seventeen years; and though not the very happiest being in the world

herself, had found enough in her duties, her friends, and her children,

to attach her to life, and make it no matter of indifference to her

when she was called on to quit them. Three girls, the two eldest

sixteen and fourteen, was an awful legacy for a mother to bequeath, an

awful charge rather, to confide to the authority and guidance of a

conceited, silly father. She had, however, one very intimate friend, a

sensible, deserving woman, who had been brought, by strong attachment

to herself, to settle close by her, in the village of Kellynch; and on

her kindness and advice, Lady Elliot mainly relied for the best help

and maintenance of the good principles and instruction which she had

been anxiously giving her daughters.

This friend, and Sir Walter, did not marry, whatever might have been

anticipated on that head by their acquaintance. Thirteen years had

passed away since Lady Elliot’s death, and they were still near

neighbours and intimate friends, and one remained a widower, the other

a widow.

That Lady Russell, of steady age and character, and extremely well

provided for, should have no thought of a second marriage, needs no

apology to the public, which is rather apt to be unreasonably

discontented when a woman \_does\_ marry again, than when she does \_not;\_

but Sir Walter’s continuing in singleness requires explanation. Be it

known then, that Sir Walter, like a good father, (having met with one

or two private disappointments in very unreasonable applications),

prided himself on remaining single for his dear daughters’ sake. For

one daughter, his eldest, he would really have given up any thing,

which he had not been very much tempted to do. Elizabeth had succeeded,

at sixteen, to all that was possible, of her mother’s rights and

consequence; and being very handsome, and very like himself, her

influence had always been great, and they had gone on together most

happily. His two other children were of very inferior value. Mary had

acquired a little artificial importance, by becoming Mrs Charles

Musgrove; but Anne, with an elegance of mind and sweetness of

character, which must have placed her high with any people of real

understanding, was nobody with either father or sister; her word had no

weight, her convenience was always to give way—she was only Anne.

To Lady Russell, indeed, she was a most dear and highly valued

god-daughter, favourite, and friend. Lady Russell loved them all; but

it was only in Anne that she could fancy the mother to revive again.

A few years before, Anne Elliot had been a very pretty girl, but her

bloom had vanished early; and as even in its height, her father had

found little to admire in her, (so totally different were her delicate

features and mild dark eyes from his own), there could be nothing in

them, now that she was faded and thin, to excite his esteem. He had

never indulged much hope, he had now none, of ever reading her name in

any other page of his favourite work. All equality of alliance must

rest with Elizabeth, for Mary had merely connected herself with an old

country family of respectability and large fortune, and had therefore

\_given\_ all the honour and received none: Elizabeth would, one day or

other, marry suitably.

It sometimes happens that a woman is handsomer at twenty-nine than she

was ten years before; and, generally speaking, if there has been

neither ill health nor anxiety, it is a time of life at which scarcely

any charm is lost. It was so with Elizabeth, still the same handsome

Miss Elliot that she had begun to be thirteen years ago, and Sir Walter

might be excused, therefore, in forgetting her age, or, at least, be

deemed only half a fool, for thinking himself and Elizabeth as blooming

as ever, amidst the wreck of the good looks of everybody else; for he

could plainly see how old all the rest of his family and acquaintance

were growing. Anne haggard, Mary coarse, every face in the

neighbourhood worsting, and the rapid increase of the crow’s foot about

Lady Russell’s temples had long been a distress to him.

Elizabeth did not quite equal her father in personal contentment.

Thirteen years had seen her mistress of Kellynch Hall, presiding and

directing with a self-possession and decision which could never have

given the idea of her being younger than she was. For thirteen years

had she been doing the honours, and laying down the domestic law at

home, and leading the way to the chaise and four, and walking

immediately after Lady Russell out of all the drawing-rooms and

dining-rooms in the country. Thirteen winters’ revolving frosts had

seen her opening every ball of credit which a scanty neighbourhood

afforded, and thirteen springs shewn their blossoms, as she travelled

up to London with her father, for a few weeks’ annual enjoyment of the

great world. She had the remembrance of all this, she had the

consciousness of being nine-and-twenty to give her some regrets and

some apprehensions; she was fully satisfied of being still quite as

handsome as ever, but she felt her approach to the years of danger, and

would have rejoiced to be certain of being properly solicited by

baronet-blood within the next twelvemonth or two. Then might she again

take up the book of books with as much enjoyment as in her early youth,

but now she liked it not. Always to be presented with the date of her

own birth and see no marriage follow but that of a youngest sister,

made the book an evil; and more than once, when her father had left it

open on the table near her, had she closed it, with averted eyes, and

pushed it away.

She had had a disappointment, moreover, which that book, and especially

the history of her own family, must ever present the remembrance of.

The heir presumptive, the very William Walter Elliot, Esq., whose

rights had been so generously supported by her father, had disappointed

her.

She had, while a very young girl, as soon as she had known him to be,

in the event of her having no brother, the future baronet, meant to

marry him, and her father had always meant that she should. He had not

been known to them as a boy; but soon after Lady Elliot’s death, Sir

Walter had sought the acquaintance, and though his overtures had not

been met with any warmth, he had persevered in seeking it, making

allowance for the modest drawing-back of youth; and, in one of their

spring excursions to London, when Elizabeth was in her first bloom, Mr

Elliot had been forced into the introduction.

He was at that time a very young man, just engaged in the study of the

law; and Elizabeth found him extremely agreeable, and every plan in his

favour was confirmed. He was invited to Kellynch Hall; he was talked of

and expected all the rest of the year; but he never came. The following

spring he was seen again in town, found equally agreeable, again

encouraged, invited, and expected, and again he did not come; and the

next tidings were that he was married. Instead of pushing his fortune

in the line marked out for the heir of the house of Elliot, he had

purchased independence by uniting himself to a rich woman of inferior

birth.

Sir Walter had resented it. As the head of the house, he felt that he

ought to have been consulted, especially after taking the young man so

publicly by the hand; “For they must have been seen together,” he

observed, “once at Tattersall’s, and twice in the lobby of the House of

Commons.” His disapprobation was expressed, but apparently very little

regarded. Mr Elliot had attempted no apology, and shewn himself as

unsolicitous of being longer noticed by the family, as Sir Walter

considered him unworthy of it: all acquaintance between them had

ceased.

This very awkward history of Mr Elliot was still, after an interval of

several years, felt with anger by Elizabeth, who had liked the man for

himself, and still more for being her father’s heir, and whose strong

family pride could see only in \_him\_ a proper match for Sir Walter

Elliot’s eldest daughter. There was not a baronet from A to Z whom her

feelings could have so willingly acknowledged as an equal. Yet so

miserably had he conducted himself, that though she was at this present

time (the summer of 1814) wearing black ribbons for his wife, she could

not admit him to be worth thinking of again. The disgrace of his first

marriage might, perhaps, as there was no reason to suppose it

perpetuated by offspring, have been got over, had he not done worse;

but he had, as by the accustomary intervention of kind friends, they

had been informed, spoken most disrespectfully of them all, most

slightingly and contemptuously of the very blood he belonged to, and

the honours which were hereafter to be his own. This could not be

pardoned.

Such were Elizabeth Elliot’s sentiments and sensations; such the cares

to alloy, the agitations to vary, the sameness and the elegance, the

prosperity and the nothingness of her scene of life; such the feelings

to give interest to a long, uneventful residence in one country circle,

to fill the vacancies which there were no habits of utility abroad, no

talents or accomplishments for home, to occupy.

But now, another occupation and solicitude of mind was beginning to be

added to these. Her father was growing distressed for money. She knew,

that when he now took up the Baronetage, it was to drive the heavy

bills of his tradespeople, and the unwelcome hints of Mr Shepherd, his

agent, from his thoughts. The Kellynch property was good, but not equal

to Sir Walter’s apprehension of the state required in its possessor.

While Lady Elliot lived, there had been method, moderation, and

economy, which had just kept him within his income; but with her had

died all such right-mindedness, and from that period he had been

constantly exceeding it. It had not been possible for him to spend

less; he had done nothing but what Sir Walter Elliot was imperiously

called on to do; but blameless as he was, he was not only growing

dreadfully in debt, but was hearing of it so often, that it became vain

to attempt concealing it longer, even partially, from his daughter. He

had given her some hints of it the last spring in town; he had gone so

far even as to say, “Can we retrench? Does it occur to you that there

is any one article in which we can retrench?” and Elizabeth, to do her

justice, had, in the first ardour of female alarm, set seriously to

think what could be done, and had finally proposed these two branches

of economy, to cut off some unnecessary charities, and to refrain from

new furnishing the drawing-room; to which expedients she afterwards

added the happy thought of their taking no present down to Anne, as had

been the usual yearly custom. But these measures, however good in

themselves, were insufficient for the real extent of the evil, the

whole of which Sir Walter found himself obliged to confess to her soon

afterwards. Elizabeth had nothing to propose of deeper efficacy. She

felt herself ill-used and unfortunate, as did her father; and they were

neither of them able to devise any means of lessening their expenses

without compromising their dignity, or relinquishing their comforts in

a way not to be borne.

There was only a small part of his estate that Sir Walter could dispose

of; but had every acre been alienable, it would have made no

difference. He had condescended to mortgage as far as he had the power,

but he would never condescend to sell. No; he would never disgrace his

name so far. The Kellynch estate should be transmitted whole and

entire, as he had received it.

Their two confidential friends, Mr Shepherd, who lived in the

neighbouring market town, and Lady Russell, were called on to advise them;

and both father and daughter seemed to expect that something should be

struck out by one or the other to remove their embarrassments and

reduce their expenditure, without involving the loss of any indulgence

of taste or pride.

CHAPTER II.

Mr Shepherd, a civil, cautious lawyer, who, whatever might be his hold

or his views on Sir Walter, would rather have the \_disagreeable\_

prompted by anybody else, excused himself from offering the slightest

hint, and only begged leave to recommend an implicit reference to the

excellent judgement of Lady Russell, from whose known good sense he

fully expected to have just such resolute measures advised as he meant

to see finally adopted.

Lady Russell was most anxiously zealous on the subject, and gave it

much serious consideration. She was a woman rather of sound than of

quick abilities, whose difficulties in coming to any decision in this

instance were great, from the opposition of two leading principles. She

was of strict integrity herself, with a delicate sense of honour; but

she was as desirous of saving Sir Walter’s feelings, as solicitous for

the credit of the family, as aristocratic in her ideas of what was due

to them, as anybody of sense and honesty could well be. She was a

benevolent, charitable, good woman, and capable of strong attachments,

most correct in her conduct, strict in her notions of decorum, and with

manners that were held a standard of good-breeding. She had a

cultivated mind, and was, generally speaking, rational and

consistent—but she had prejudices on the side of ancestry; she had a

value for rank and consequence, which blinded her a little to the

faults of those who possessed them. Herself the widow of only a knight,

she gave the dignity of a baronet all its due; and Sir Walter,

independent of his claims as an old acquaintance, an attentive

neighbour, an obliging landlord, the husband of her very dear friend,

the father of Anne and her sisters, was, as being Sir Walter, in her

apprehension, entitled to a great deal of compassion and consideration

under his present difficulties.

They must retrench; that did not admit of a doubt. But she was very

anxious to have it done with the least possible pain to him and

Elizabeth. She drew up plans of economy, she made exact calculations,

and she did what nobody else thought of doing: she consulted Anne, who

never seemed considered by the others as having any interest in the

question. She consulted, and in a degree was influenced by her in

marking out the scheme of retrenchment which was at last submitted to

Sir Walter. Every emendation of Anne’s had been on the side of honesty

against importance. She wanted more vigorous measures, a more complete

reformation, a quicker release from debt, a much higher tone of

indifference for everything but justice and equity.

“If we can persuade your father to all this,” said Lady Russell,

looking over her paper, “much may be done. If he will adopt these

regulations, in seven years he will be clear; and I hope we may be able

to convince him and Elizabeth, that Kellynch Hall has a respectability

in itself which cannot be affected by these reductions; and that the

true dignity of Sir Walter Elliot will be very far from lessened in the

eyes of sensible people, by acting like a man of principle. What will

he be doing, in fact, but what very many of our first families have

done, or ought to do? There will be nothing singular in his case; and

it is singularity which often makes the worst part of our suffering, as

it always does of our conduct. I have great hope of prevailing. We must

be serious and decided; for after all, the person who has contracted

debts must pay them; and though a great deal is due to the feelings of

the gentleman, and the head of a house, like your father, there is

still more due to the character of an honest man.”

This was the principle on which Anne wanted her father to be

proceeding, his friends to be urging him. She considered it as an act

of indispensable duty to clear away the claims of creditors with all

the expedition which the most comprehensive retrenchments could secure,

and saw no dignity in anything short of it. She wanted it to be

prescribed, and felt as a duty. She rated Lady Russell’s influence

highly; and as to the severe degree of self-denial which her own

conscience prompted, she believed there might be little more difficulty

in persuading them to a complete, than to half a reformation. Her

knowledge of her father and Elizabeth inclined her to think that the

sacrifice of one pair of horses would be hardly less painful than of

both, and so on, through the whole list of Lady Russell’s too gentle

reductions.

How Anne’s more rigid requisitions might have been taken is of little

consequence. Lady Russell’s had no success at all: could not be put up

with, were not to be borne. “What! every comfort of life knocked off!

Journeys, London, servants, horses, table—contractions and restrictions

every where! To live no longer with the decencies even of a private

gentleman! No, he would sooner quit Kellynch Hall at once, than remain

in it on such disgraceful terms.”

“Quit Kellynch Hall.” The hint was immediately taken up by Mr Shepherd,

whose interest was involved in the reality of Sir Walter’s retrenching,

and who was perfectly persuaded that nothing would be done without a

change of abode. “Since the idea had been started in the very quarter

which ought to dictate, he had no scruple,” he said, “in confessing his

judgement to be entirely on that side. It did not appear to him that

Sir Walter could materially alter his style of living in a house which

had such a character of hospitality and ancient dignity to support. In

any other place Sir Walter might judge for himself; and would be looked

up to, as regulating the modes of life in whatever way he might choose

to model his household.”

Sir Walter would quit Kellynch Hall; and after a very few days more of

doubt and indecision, the great question of whither he should go was

settled, and the first outline of this important change made out.

There had been three alternatives, London, Bath, or another house in

the country. All Anne’s wishes had been for the latter. A small house

in their own neighbourhood, where they might still have Lady Russell’s

society, still be near Mary, and still have the pleasure of sometimes

seeing the lawns and groves of Kellynch, was the object of her

ambition. But the usual fate of Anne attended her, in having something

very opposite from her inclination fixed on. She disliked Bath, and did

not think it agreed with her; and Bath was to be her home.

Sir Walter had at first thought more of London; but Mr Shepherd felt

that he could not be trusted in London, and had been skilful enough to

dissuade him from it, and make Bath preferred. It was a much safer

place for a gentleman in his predicament: he might there be important

at comparatively little expense. Two material advantages of Bath over

London had of course been given all their weight: its more convenient

distance from Kellynch, only fifty miles, and Lady Russell’s spending

some part of every winter there; and to the very great satisfaction of

Lady Russell, whose first views on the projected change had been for

Bath, Sir Walter and Elizabeth were induced to believe that they should

lose neither consequence nor enjoyment by settling there.

Lady Russell felt obliged to oppose her dear Anne’s known wishes. It

would be too much to expect Sir Walter to descend into a small house in

his own neighbourhood. Anne herself would have found the mortifications

of it more than she foresaw, and to Sir Walter’s feelings they must

have been dreadful. And with regard to Anne’s dislike of Bath, she

considered it as a prejudice and mistake arising, first, from the

circumstance of her having been three years at school there, after her

mother’s death; and secondly, from her happening to be not in perfectly

good spirits the only winter which she had afterwards spent there with

herself.

Lady Russell was fond of Bath, in short, and disposed to think it must

suit them all; and as to her young friend’s health, by passing all the

warm months with her at Kellynch Lodge, every danger would be avoided;

and it was in fact, a change which must do both health and spirits

good. Anne had been too little from home, too little seen. Her spirits

were not high. A larger society would improve them. She wanted her to

be more known.

The undesirableness of any other house in the same neighbourhood for

Sir Walter was certainly much strengthened by one part, and a very

material part of the scheme, which had been happily engrafted on the

beginning. He was not only to quit his home, but to see it in the hands

of others; a trial of fortitude, which stronger heads than Sir Walter’s

have found too much. Kellynch Hall was to be let. This, however, was a

profound secret, not to be breathed beyond their own circle.

Sir Walter could not have borne the degradation of being known to

design letting his house. Mr Shepherd had once mentioned the word

“advertise,” but never dared approach it again. Sir Walter spurned the

idea of its being offered in any manner; forbad the slightest hint

being dropped of his having such an intention; and it was only on the

supposition of his being spontaneously solicited by some most

unexceptionable applicant, on his own terms, and as a great favour,

that he would let it at all.

How quick come the reasons for approving what we like! Lady Russell had

another excellent one at hand, for being extremely glad that Sir Walter

and his family were to remove from the country. Elizabeth had been

lately forming an intimacy, which she wished to see interrupted. It was

with the daughter of Mr Shepherd, who had returned, after an

unprosperous marriage, to her father’s house, with the additional

burden of two children. She was a clever young woman, who understood

the art of pleasing—the art of pleasing, at least, at Kellynch Hall;

and who had made herself so acceptable to Miss Elliot, as to have been

already staying there more than once, in spite of all that Lady

Russell, who thought it a friendship quite out of place, could hint of

caution and reserve.

Lady Russell, indeed, had scarcely any influence with Elizabeth, and

seemed to love her, rather because she would love her, than because

Elizabeth deserved it. She had never received from her more than

outward attention, nothing beyond the observances of complaisance; had

never succeeded in any point which she wanted to carry, against

previous inclination. She had been repeatedly very earnest in trying to

get Anne included in the visit to London, sensibly open to all the

injustice and all the discredit of the selfish arrangements which shut

her out, and on many lesser occasions had endeavoured to give Elizabeth

the advantage of her own better judgement and experience; but always in

vain: Elizabeth would go her own way; and never had she pursued it in

more decided opposition to Lady Russell than in this selection of Mrs

Clay; turning from the society of so deserving a sister, to bestow her

affection and confidence on one who ought to have been nothing to her

but the object of distant civility.

From situation, Mrs Clay was, in Lady Russell’s estimate, a very

unequal, and in her character she believed a very dangerous companion;

and a removal that would leave Mrs Clay behind, and bring a choice of

more suitable intimates within Miss Elliot’s reach, was therefore an

object of first-rate importance.

CHAPTER III.

“I must take leave to observe, Sir Walter,” said Mr Shepherd one

morning at Kellynch Hall, as he laid down the newspaper, “that the

present juncture is much in our favour. This peace will be turning all

our rich naval officers ashore. They will be all wanting a home. Could

not be a better time, Sir Walter, for having a choice of tenants, very

responsible tenants. Many a noble fortune has been made during the war.

If a rich admiral were to come in our way, Sir Walter—”

“He would be a very lucky man, Shepherd,” replied Sir Walter; “that’s

all I have to remark. A prize indeed would Kellynch Hall be to him;

rather the greatest prize of all, let him have taken ever so many

before; hey, Shepherd?”

Mr Shepherd laughed, as he knew he must, at this wit, and then added—

“I presume to observe, Sir Walter, that, in the way of business,

gentlemen of the navy are well to deal with. I have had a little

knowledge of their methods of doing business; and I am free to confess

that they have very liberal notions, and are as likely to make

desirable tenants as any set of people one should meet with. Therefore,

Sir Walter, what I would take leave to suggest is, that if in

consequence of any rumours getting abroad of your intention; which must

be contemplated as a possible thing, because we know how difficult it

is to keep the actions and designs of one part of the world from the

notice and curiosity of the other; consequence has its tax; I, John

Shepherd, might conceal any family-matters that I chose, for nobody

would think it worth their while to observe me; but Sir Walter Elliot

has eyes upon him which it may be very difficult to elude; and

therefore, thus much I venture upon, that it will not greatly surprise

me if, with all our caution, some rumour of the truth should get

abroad; in the supposition of which, as I was going to observe, since

applications will unquestionably follow, I should think any from our

wealthy naval commanders particularly worth attending to; and beg leave

to add, that two hours will bring me over at any time, to save you the

trouble of replying.”

Sir Walter only nodded. But soon afterwards, rising and pacing the

room, he observed sarcastically—

“There are few among the gentlemen of the navy, I imagine, who would

not be surprised to find themselves in a house of this description.”

“They would look around them, no doubt, and bless their good fortune,”

said Mrs Clay, for Mrs Clay was present: her father had driven her

over, nothing being of so much use to Mrs Clay’s health as a drive to

Kellynch: “but I quite agree with my father in thinking a sailor might

be a very desirable tenant. I have known a good deal of the profession;

and besides their liberality, they are so neat and careful in all their

ways! These valuable pictures of yours, Sir Walter, if you chose to

leave them, would be perfectly safe. Everything in and about the house

would be taken such excellent care of! The gardens and shrubberies

would be kept in almost as high order as they are now. You need not be

afraid, Miss Elliot, of your own sweet flower gardens being neglected.”

“As to all that,” rejoined Sir Walter coolly, “supposing I were induced

to let my house, I have by no means made up my mind as to the

privileges to be annexed to it. I am not particularly disposed to

favour a tenant. The park would be open to him of course, and few navy

officers, or men of any other description, can have had such a range;

but what restrictions I might impose on the use of the

pleasure-grounds, is another thing. I am not fond of the idea of my

shrubberies being always approachable; and I should recommend Miss

Elliot to be on her guard with respect to her flower garden. I am very

little disposed to grant a tenant of Kellynch Hall any extraordinary

favour, I assure you, be he sailor or soldier.”

After a short pause, Mr Shepherd presumed to say—

“In all these cases, there are established usages which make everything

plain and easy between landlord and tenant. Your interest, Sir Walter,

is in pretty safe hands. Depend upon me for taking care that no tenant

has more than his just rights. I venture to hint, that Sir Walter

Elliot cannot be half so jealous for his own, as John Shepherd will be

for him.”

Here Anne spoke—

“The navy, I think, who have done so much for us, have at least an

equal claim with any other set of men, for all the comforts and all the

privileges which any home can give. Sailors work hard enough for their

comforts, we must all allow.”

“Very true, very true. What Miss Anne says, is very true,” was Mr

Shepherd’s rejoinder, and “Oh! certainly,” was his daughter’s; but Sir

Walter’s remark was, soon afterwards—

“The profession has its utility, but I should be sorry to see any

friend of mine belonging to it.”

“Indeed!” was the reply, and with a look of surprise.

“Yes; it is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of

objection to it. First, as being the means of bringing persons of

obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which

their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it

cuts up a man’s youth and vigour most horribly; a sailor grows old

sooner than any other man. I have observed it all my life. A man is in

greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of one whose

father, his father might have disdained to speak to, and of becoming

prematurely an object of disgust himself, than in any other line. One

day last spring, in town, I was in company with two men, striking

instances of what I am talking of; Lord St Ives, whose father we all

know to have been a country curate, without bread to eat; I was to give

place to Lord St Ives, and a certain Admiral Baldwin, the most

deplorable-looking personage you can imagine; his face the colour of

mahogany, rough and rugged to the last degree; all lines and wrinkles,

nine grey hairs of a side, and nothing but a dab of powder at top. ‘In

the name of heaven, who is that old fellow?’ said I to a friend of mine

who was standing near, (Sir Basil Morley). ‘Old fellow!’ cried Sir

Basil, ‘it is Admiral Baldwin. What do you take his age to be?’

‘Sixty,’ said I, ‘or perhaps sixty-two.’ ‘Forty,’ replied Sir Basil,

‘forty, and no more.’ Picture to yourselves my amazement; I shall not

easily forget Admiral Baldwin. I never saw quite so wretched an example

of what a sea-faring life can do; but to a degree, I know it is the

same with them all: they are all knocked about, and exposed to every

climate, and every weather, till they are not fit to be seen. It is a

pity they are not knocked on the head at once, before they reach

Admiral Baldwin’s age.”

“Nay, Sir Walter,” cried Mrs Clay, “this is being severe indeed. Have a

little mercy on the poor men. We are not all born to be handsome. The

sea is no beautifier, certainly; sailors do grow old betimes; I have

observed it; they soon lose the look of youth. But then, is not it the

same with many other professions, perhaps most other? Soldiers, in

active service, are not at all better off: and even in the quieter

professions, there is a toil and a labour of the mind, if not of the

body, which seldom leaves a man’s looks to the natural effect of time.

The lawyer plods, quite care-worn; the physician is up at all hours,

and travelling in all weather; and even the clergyman—” she stopt a

moment to consider what might do for the clergyman;—“and even the

clergyman, you know is obliged to go into infected rooms, and expose

his health and looks to all the injury of a poisonous atmosphere. In

fact, as I have long been convinced, though every profession is

necessary and honourable in its turn, it is only the lot of those who

are not obliged to follow any, who can live in a regular way, in the

country, choosing their own hours, following their own pursuits, and

living on their own property, without the torment of trying for more;

it is only \_their\_ lot, I say, to hold the blessings of health and a

good appearance to the utmost: I know no other set of men but what lose

something of their personableness when they cease to be quite young.”

It seemed as if Mr Shepherd, in this anxiety to bespeak Sir Walter’s

good will towards a naval officer as tenant, had been gifted with

foresight; for the very first application for the house was from an

Admiral Croft, with whom he shortly afterwards fell into company in

attending the quarter sessions at Taunton; and indeed, he had received

a hint of the Admiral from a London correspondent. By the report which

he hastened over to Kellynch to make, Admiral Croft was a native of

Somersetshire, who having acquired a very handsome fortune, was wishing

to settle in his own country, and had come down to Taunton in order to

look at some advertised places in that immediate neighbourhood, which,

however, had not suited him; that accidentally hearing—(it was just as

he had foretold, Mr Shepherd observed, Sir Walter’s concerns could not

be kept a secret,)—accidentally hearing of the possibility of Kellynch

Hall being to let, and understanding his (Mr Shepherd’s) connection

with the owner, he had introduced himself to him in order to make

particular inquiries, and had, in the course of a pretty long

conference, expressed as strong an inclination for the place as a man

who knew it only by description could feel; and given Mr Shepherd, in

his explicit account of himself, every proof of his being a most

responsible, eligible tenant.

“And who is Admiral Croft?” was Sir Walter’s cold suspicious inquiry.

Mr Shepherd answered for his being of a gentleman’s family, and

mentioned a place; and Anne, after the little pause which followed,

added—

“He is a rear admiral of the white. He was in the Trafalgar action, and

has been in the East Indies since; he was stationed there, I believe,

several years.”

“Then I take it for granted,” observed Sir Walter, “that his face is

about as orange as the cuffs and capes of my livery.”

Mr Shepherd hastened to assure him, that Admiral Croft was a very hale,

hearty, well-looking man, a little weather-beaten, to be sure, but not

much, and quite the gentleman in all his notions and behaviour; not

likely to make the smallest difficulty about terms, only wanted a

comfortable home, and to get into it as soon as possible; knew he must

pay for his convenience; knew what rent a ready-furnished house of that

consequence might fetch; should not have been surprised if Sir Walter

had asked more; had inquired about the manor; would be glad of the

deputation, certainly, but made no great point of it; said he sometimes

took out a gun, but never killed; quite the gentleman.

Mr Shepherd was eloquent on the subject; pointing out all the

circumstances of the Admiral’s family, which made him peculiarly

desirable as a tenant. He was a married man, and without children; the

very state to be wished for. A house was never taken good care of, Mr

Shepherd observed, without a lady: he did not know, whether furniture

might not be in danger of suffering as much where there was no lady, as

where there were many children. A lady, without a family, was the very

best preserver of furniture in the world. He had seen Mrs Croft, too;

she was at Taunton with the admiral, and had been present almost all

the time they were talking the matter over.

“And a very well-spoken, genteel, shrewd lady, she seemed to be,”

continued he; “asked more questions about the house, and terms, and

taxes, than the Admiral himself, and seemed more conversant with

business; and moreover, Sir Walter, I found she was not quite

unconnected in this country, any more than her husband; that is to say,

she is sister to a gentleman who did live amongst us once; she told me

so herself: sister to the gentleman who lived a few years back at

Monkford. Bless me! what was his name? At this moment I cannot

recollect his name, though I have heard it so lately. Penelope, my

dear, can you help me to the name of the gentleman who lived at

Monkford: Mrs Croft’s brother?”

But Mrs Clay was talking so eagerly with Miss Elliot, that she did not

hear the appeal.

“I have no conception whom you can mean, Shepherd; I remember no

gentleman resident at Monkford since the time of old Governor Trent.”

“Bless me! how very odd! I shall forget my own name soon, I suppose. A

name that I am so very well acquainted with; knew the gentleman so well

by sight; seen him a hundred times; came to consult me once, I

remember, about a trespass of one of his neighbours; farmer’s man

breaking into his orchard; wall torn down; apples stolen; caught in the

fact; and afterwards, contrary to my judgement, submitted to an

amicable compromise. Very odd indeed!”

After waiting another moment—

“You mean Mr Wentworth, I suppose?” said Anne.

Mr Shepherd was all gratitude.

“Wentworth was the very name! Mr Wentworth was the very man. He had the

curacy of Monkford, you know, Sir Walter, some time back, for two or

three years. Came there about the year —5, I take it. You remember

him, I am sure.”

“Wentworth? Oh! ay, Mr Wentworth, the curate of Monkford. You misled me

by the term \_gentleman\_. I thought you were speaking of some man of

property: Mr Wentworth was nobody, I remember; quite unconnected;

nothing to do with the Strafford family. One wonders how the names of

many of our nobility become so common.”

As Mr Shepherd perceived that this connexion of the Crofts did them no

service with Sir Walter, he mentioned it no more; returning, with all

his zeal, to dwell on the circumstances more indisputably in their

favour; their age, and number, and fortune; the high idea they had

formed of Kellynch Hall, and extreme solicitude for the advantage of

renting it; making it appear as if they ranked nothing beyond the

happiness of being the tenants of Sir Walter Elliot: an extraordinary

taste, certainly, could they have been supposed in the secret of Sir

Walter’s estimate of the dues of a tenant.

It succeeded, however; and though Sir Walter must ever look with an

evil eye on anyone intending to inhabit that house, and think them

infinitely too well off in being permitted to rent it on the highest

terms, he was talked into allowing Mr Shepherd to proceed in the

treaty, and authorising him to wait on Admiral Croft, who still

remained at Taunton, and fix a day for the house being seen.

Sir Walter was not very wise; but still he had experience enough of the

world to feel, that a more unobjectionable tenant, in all essentials,

than Admiral Croft bid fair to be, could hardly offer. So far went his

understanding; and his vanity supplied a little additional soothing, in

the Admiral’s situation in life, which was just high enough, and not

too high. “I have let my house to Admiral Croft,” would sound extremely

well; very much better than to any mere \_Mr.\_——; a \_Mr.\_ (save,

perhaps, some half dozen in the nation,) always needs a note of

explanation. An admiral speaks his own consequence, and, at the same

time, can never make a baronet look small. In all their dealings and

intercourse, Sir Walter Elliot must ever have the precedence.

Nothing could be done without a reference to Elizabeth: but her

inclination was growing so strong for a removal, that she was happy to

have it fixed and expedited by a tenant at hand; and not a word to

suspend decision was uttered by her.

Mr Shepherd was completely empowered to act; and no sooner had such an

end been reached, than Anne, who had been a most attentive listener to

the whole, left the room, to seek the comfort of cool air for her

flushed cheeks; and as she walked along a favourite grove, said, with a

gentle sigh, “A few months more, and \_he\_, perhaps, may be walking

here.”

CHAPTER IV.

\_He\_ was not Mr Wentworth, the former curate of Monkford, however

suspicious appearances may be, but a Captain Frederick Wentworth, his

brother, who being made commander in consequence of the action off St

Domingo, and not immediately employed, had come into Somersetshire, in

the summer of 1806; and having no parent living, found a home for half

a year at Monkford. He was, at that time, a remarkably fine young man,

with a great deal of intelligence, spirit, and brilliancy; and Anne an

extremely pretty girl, with gentleness, modesty, taste, and feeling.

Half the sum of attraction, on either side, might have been enough, for

he had nothing to do, and she had hardly anybody to love; but the

encounter of such lavish recommendations could not fail. They were

gradually acquainted, and when acquainted, rapidly and deeply in love.

It would be difficult to say which had seen highest perfection in the

other, or which had been the happiest: she, in receiving his

declarations and proposals, or he in having them accepted.

A short period of exquisite felicity followed, and but a short one.

Troubles soon arose. Sir Walter, on being applied to, without actually

withholding his consent, or saying it should never be, gave it all the

negative of great astonishment, great coldness, great silence, and a

professed resolution of doing nothing for his daughter. He thought it a

very degrading alliance; and Lady Russell, though with more tempered

and pardonable pride, received it as a most unfortunate one.

Anne Elliot, with all her claims of birth, beauty, and mind, to throw

herself away at nineteen; involve herself at nineteen in an engagement

with a young man, who had nothing but himself to recommend him, and no

hopes of attaining affluence, but in the chances of a most uncertain

profession, and no connexions to secure even his farther rise in the

profession, would be, indeed, a throwing away, which she grieved to

think of! Anne Elliot, so young; known to so few, to be snatched off by

a stranger without alliance or fortune; or rather sunk by him into a

state of most wearing, anxious, youth-killing dependence! It must not

be, if by any fair interference of friendship, any representations from

one who had almost a mother’s love, and mother’s rights, it would be

prevented.

Captain Wentworth had no fortune. He had been lucky in his profession;

but spending freely, what had come freely, had realized nothing. But he

was confident that he should soon be rich: full of life and ardour, he

knew that he should soon have a ship, and soon be on a station that

would lead to everything he wanted. He had always been lucky; he knew

he should be so still. Such confidence, powerful in its own warmth, and

bewitching in the wit which often expressed it, must have been enough

for Anne; but Lady Russell saw it very differently. His sanguine

temper, and fearlessness of mind, operated very differently on her. She

saw in it but an aggravation of the evil. It only added a dangerous

character to himself. He was brilliant, he was headstrong. Lady Russell

had little taste for wit, and of anything approaching to imprudence a

horror. She deprecated the connexion in every light.

Such opposition, as these feelings produced, was more than Anne could

combat. Young and gentle as she was, it might yet have been possible to

withstand her father’s ill-will, though unsoftened by one kind word or

look on the part of her sister; but Lady Russell, whom she had always

loved and relied on, could not, with such steadiness of opinion, and

such tenderness of manner, be continually advising her in vain. She was

persuaded to believe the engagement a wrong thing: indiscreet,

improper, hardly capable of success, and not deserving it. But it was

not a merely selfish caution, under which she acted, in putting an end

to it. Had she not imagined herself consulting his good, even more than

her own, she could hardly have given him up. The belief of being

prudent, and self-denying, principally for \_his\_ advantage, was her

chief consolation, under the misery of a parting, a final parting; and

every consolation was required, for she had to encounter all the

additional pain of opinions, on his side, totally unconvinced and

unbending, and of his feeling himself ill used by so forced a

relinquishment. He had left the country in consequence.

A few months had seen the beginning and the end of their acquaintance;

but not with a few months ended Anne’s share of suffering from it. Her

attachment and regrets had, for a long time, clouded every enjoyment of

youth, and an early loss of bloom and spirits had been their lasting

effect.

More than seven years were gone since this little history of sorrowful

interest had reached its close; and time had softened down much,

perhaps nearly all of peculiar attachment to him, but she had been too

dependent on time alone; no aid had been given in change of place

(except in one visit to Bath soon after the rupture), or in any novelty

or enlargement of society. No one had ever come within the Kellynch

circle, who could bear a comparison with Frederick Wentworth, as he

stood in her memory. No second attachment, the only thoroughly natural,

happy, and sufficient cure, at her time of life, had been possible to

the nice tone of her mind, the fastidiousness of her taste, in the

small limits of the society around them. She had been solicited, when

about two-and-twenty, to change her name, by the young man, who not

long afterwards found a more willing mind in her younger sister; and

Lady Russell had lamented her refusal; for Charles Musgrove was the

eldest son of a man, whose landed property and general importance were

second in that country, only to Sir Walter’s, and of good character and

appearance; and however Lady Russell might have asked yet for something

more, while Anne was nineteen, she would have rejoiced to see her at

twenty-two so respectably removed from the partialities and injustice

of her father’s house, and settled so permanently near herself. But in

this case, Anne had left nothing for advice to do; and though Lady

Russell, as satisfied as ever with her own discretion, never wished the

past undone, she began now to have the anxiety which borders on

hopelessness for Anne’s being tempted, by some man of talents and

independence, to enter a state for which she held her to be peculiarly

fitted by her warm affections and domestic habits.

They knew not each other’s opinion, either its constancy or its change,

on the one leading point of Anne’s conduct, for the subject was never

alluded to; but Anne, at seven-and-twenty, thought very differently

from what she had been made to think at nineteen. She did not blame

Lady Russell, she did not blame herself for having been guided by her;

but she felt that were any young person, in similar circumstances, to

apply to her for counsel, they would never receive any of such certain

immediate wretchedness, such uncertain future good. She was persuaded

that under every disadvantage of disapprobation at home, and every

anxiety attending his profession, all their probable fears, delays, and

disappointments, she should yet have been a happier woman in

maintaining the engagement, than she had been in the sacrifice of it;

and this, she fully believed, had the usual share, had even more than

the usual share of all such solicitudes and suspense been theirs,

without reference to the actual results of their case, which, as it

happened, would have bestowed earlier prosperity than could be

reasonably calculated on. All his sanguine expectations, all his

confidence had been justified. His genius and ardour had seemed to

foresee and to command his prosperous path. He had, very soon after

their engagement ceased, got employ: and all that he had told her would

follow, had taken place. He had distinguished himself, and early gained

the other step in rank, and must now, by successive captures, have made

a handsome fortune. She had only navy lists and newspapers for her

authority, but she could not doubt his being rich; and, in favour of

his constancy, she had no reason to believe him married.

How eloquent could Anne Elliot have been! how eloquent, at least, were

her wishes on the side of early warm attachment, and a cheerful

confidence in futurity, against that over-anxious caution which seems

to insult exertion and distrust Providence! She had been forced into

prudence in her youth, she learned romance as she grew older: the

natural sequel of an unnatural beginning.

With all these circumstances, recollections and feelings, she could not

hear that Captain Wentworth’s sister was likely to live at Kellynch

without a revival of former pain; and many a stroll, and many a sigh,

were necessary to dispel the agitation of the idea. She often told

herself it was folly, before she could harden her nerves sufficiently

to feel the continual discussion of the Crofts and their business no

evil. She was assisted, however, by that perfect indifference and

apparent unconsciousness, among the only three of her own friends in

the secret of the past, which seemed almost to deny any recollection of

it. She could do justice to the superiority of Lady Russell’s motives

in this, over those of her father and Elizabeth; she could honour all

the better feelings of her calmness; but the general air of oblivion

among them was highly important from whatever it sprung; and in the

event of Admiral Croft’s really taking Kellynch Hall, she rejoiced anew

over the conviction which had always been most grateful to her, of the

past being known to those three only among her connexions, by whom no

syllable, she believed, would ever be whispered, and in the trust that

among his, the brother only with whom he had been residing, had

received any information of their short-lived engagement. That brother

had been long removed from the country and being a sensible man, and,

moreover, a single man at the time, she had a fond dependence on no

human creature’s having heard of it from him.

The sister, Mrs Croft, had then been out of England, accompanying her

husband on a foreign station, and her own sister, Mary, had been at

school while it all occurred; and never admitted by the pride of some,

and the delicacy of others, to the smallest knowledge of it afterwards.

With these supports, she hoped that the acquaintance between herself

and the Crofts, which, with Lady Russell, still resident in Kellynch,

and Mary fixed only three miles off, must be anticipated, need not

involve any particular awkwardness.

CHAPTER V.

On the morning appointed for Admiral and Mrs Croft’s seeing Kellynch

Hall, Anne found it most natural to take her almost daily walk to Lady

Russell’s, and keep out of the way till all was over; when she found it

most natural to be sorry that she had missed the opportunity of seeing

them.

This meeting of the two parties proved highly satisfactory, and decided

the whole business at once. Each lady was previously well disposed for

an agreement, and saw nothing, therefore, but good manners in the

other; and with regard to the gentlemen, there was such an hearty good

humour, such an open, trusting liberality on the Admiral’s side, as

could not but influence Sir Walter, who had besides been flattered into

his very best and most polished behaviour by Mr Shepherd’s assurances

of his being known, by report, to the Admiral, as a model of good

breeding.

The house and grounds, and furniture, were approved, the Crofts were

approved, terms, time, every thing, and every body, was right; and Mr

Shepherd’s clerks were set to work, without there having been a single

preliminary difference to modify of all that “This indenture sheweth.”

Sir Walter, without hesitation, declared the Admiral to be the

best-looking sailor he had ever met with, and went so far as to say,

that if his own man might have had the arranging of his hair, he should

not be ashamed of being seen with him any where; and the Admiral, with

sympathetic cordiality, observed to his wife as they drove back through

the park, “I thought we should soon come to a deal, my dear, in spite

of what they told us at Taunton. The Baronet will never set the Thames

on fire, but there seems to be no harm in him.”—reciprocal compliments,

which would have been esteemed about equal.

The Crofts were to have possession at Michaelmas; and as Sir Walter

proposed removing to Bath in the course of the preceding month, there

was no time to be lost in making every dependent arrangement.

Lady Russell, convinced that Anne would not be allowed to be of any

use, or any importance, in the choice of the house which they were

going to secure, was very unwilling to have her hurried away so soon,

and wanted to make it possible for her to stay behind till she might

convey her to Bath herself after Christmas; but having engagements of

her own which must take her from Kellynch for several weeks, she was

unable to give the full invitation she wished, and Anne though dreading

the possible heats of September in all the white glare of Bath, and

grieving to forego all the influence so sweet and so sad of the

autumnal months in the country, did not think that, everything

considered, she wished to remain. It would be most right, and most

wise, and, therefore must involve least suffering to go with the

others.

Something occurred, however, to give her a different duty. Mary, often

a little unwell, and always thinking a great deal of her own

complaints, and always in the habit of claiming Anne when anything was

the matter, was indisposed; and foreseeing that she should not have a

day’s health all the autumn, entreated, or rather required her, for it

was hardly entreaty, to come to Uppercross Cottage, and bear her

company as long as she should want her, instead of going to Bath.

“I cannot possibly do without Anne,” was Mary’s reasoning; and

Elizabeth’s reply was, “Then I am sure Anne had better stay, for nobody

will want her in Bath.”

To be claimed as a good, though in an improper style, is at least

better than being rejected as no good at all; and Anne, glad to be

thought of some use, glad to have anything marked out as a duty, and

certainly not sorry to have the scene of it in the country, and her own

dear country, readily agreed to stay.

This invitation of Mary’s removed all Lady Russell’s difficulties, and

it was consequently soon settled that Anne should not go to Bath till

Lady Russell took her, and that all the intervening time should be

divided between Uppercross Cottage and Kellynch Lodge.

So far all was perfectly right; but Lady Russell was almost startled by

the wrong of one part of the Kellynch Hall plan, when it burst on her,

which was, Mrs Clay’s being engaged to go to Bath with Sir Walter and

Elizabeth, as a most important and valuable assistant to the latter in

all the business before her. Lady Russell was extremely sorry that such

a measure should have been resorted to at all, wondered, grieved, and

feared; and the affront it contained to Anne, in Mrs Clay’s being of so

much use, while Anne could be of none, was a very sore aggravation.

Anne herself was become hardened to such affronts; but she felt the

imprudence of the arrangement quite as keenly as Lady Russell. With a

great deal of quiet observation, and a knowledge, which she often

wished less, of her father’s character, she was sensible that results

the most serious to his family from the intimacy were more than

possible. She did not imagine that her father had at present an idea of

the kind. Mrs Clay had freckles, and a projecting tooth, and a clumsy

wrist, which he was continually making severe remarks upon, in her

absence; but she was young, and certainly altogether well-looking, and

possessed, in an acute mind and assiduous pleasing manners, infinitely

more dangerous attractions than any merely personal might have been.

Anne was so impressed by the degree of their danger, that she could not

excuse herself from trying to make it perceptible to her sister. She

had little hope of success; but Elizabeth, who in the event of such a

reverse would be so much more to be pitied than herself, should never,

she thought, have reason to reproach her for giving no warning.

She spoke, and seemed only to offend. Elizabeth could not conceive how

such an absurd suspicion should occur to her, and indignantly answered

for each party’s perfectly knowing their situation.

“Mrs Clay,” said she, warmly, “never forgets who she is; and as I am

rather better acquainted with her sentiments than you can be, I can

assure you, that upon the subject of marriage they are particularly

nice, and that she reprobates all inequality of condition and rank more

strongly than most people. And as to my father, I really should not

have thought that he, who has kept himself single so long for our

sakes, need be suspected now. If Mrs Clay were a very beautiful woman,

I grant you, it might be wrong to have her so much with me; not that

anything in the world, I am sure, would induce my father to make a

degrading match, but he might be rendered unhappy. But poor Mrs Clay

who, with all her merits, can never have been reckoned tolerably

pretty, I really think poor Mrs Clay may be staying here in perfect

safety. One would imagine you had never heard my father speak of her

personal misfortunes, though I know you must fifty times. That tooth of

hers and those freckles. Freckles do not disgust me so very much as

they do him. I have known a face not materially disfigured by a few,

but he abominates them. You must have heard him notice Mrs Clay’s

freckles.”

“There is hardly any personal defect,” replied Anne, “which an

agreeable manner might not gradually reconcile one to.”

“I think very differently,” answered Elizabeth, shortly; “an agreeable

manner may set off handsome features, but can never alter plain ones.

However, at any rate, as I have a great deal more at stake on this

point than anybody else can have, I think it rather unnecessary in you

to be advising me.”

Anne had done; glad that it was over, and not absolutely hopeless of

doing good. Elizabeth, though resenting the suspicion, might yet be

made observant by it.

The last office of the four carriage-horses was to draw Sir Walter,

Miss Elliot, and Mrs Clay to Bath. The party drove off in very good

spirits; Sir Walter prepared with condescending bows for all the

afflicted tenantry and cottagers who might have had a hint to show

themselves, and Anne walked up at the same time, in a sort of desolate

tranquillity, to the Lodge, where she was to spend the first week.

Her friend was not in better spirits than herself. Lady Russell felt

this break-up of the family exceedingly. Their respectability was as

dear to her as her own, and a daily intercourse had become precious by

habit. It was painful to look upon their deserted grounds, and still

worse to anticipate the new hands they were to fall into; and to escape

the solitariness and the melancholy of so altered a village, and be out

of the way when Admiral and Mrs Croft first arrived, she had determined

to make her own absence from home begin when she must give up Anne.

Accordingly their removal was made together, and Anne was set down at

Uppercross Cottage, in the first stage of Lady Russell’s journey.

Uppercross was a moderate-sized village, which a few years back had

been completely in the old English style, containing only two houses

superior in appearance to those of the yeomen and labourers; the

mansion of the squire, with its high walls, great gates, and old trees,

substantial and unmodernized, and the compact, tight parsonage,

enclosed in its own neat garden, with a vine and a pear-tree trained

round its casements; but upon the marriage of the young ’squire, it had

received the improvement of a farm-house elevated into a cottage, for

his residence, and Uppercross Cottage, with its veranda, French

windows, and other prettiness, was quite as likely to catch the

traveller’s eye as the more consistent and considerable aspect and

premises of the Great House, about a quarter of a mile farther on.

Here Anne had often been staying. She knew the ways of Uppercross as

well as those of Kellynch. The two families were so continually

meeting, so much in the habit of running in and out of each other’s

house at all hours, that it was rather a surprise to her to find Mary

alone; but being alone, her being unwell and out of spirits was almost

a matter of course. Though better endowed than the elder sister, Mary

had not Anne’s understanding nor temper. While well, and happy, and

properly attended to, she had great good humour and excellent spirits;

but any indisposition sunk her completely. She had no resources for

solitude; and inheriting a considerable share of the Elliot

self-importance, was very prone to add to every other distress that of

fancying herself neglected and ill-used. In person, she was inferior to

both sisters, and had, even in her bloom, only reached the dignity of

being “a fine girl.” She was now lying on the faded sofa of the pretty

little drawing-room, the once elegant furniture of which had been

gradually growing shabby, under the influence of four summers and two

children; and, on Anne’s appearing, greeted her with—

“So, you are come at last! I began to think I should never see you. I

am so ill I can hardly speak. I have not seen a creature the whole

morning!”

“I am sorry to find you unwell,” replied Anne. “You sent me such a good

account of yourself on Thursday!”

“Yes, I made the best of it; I always do: but I was very far from well

at the time; and I do not think I ever was so ill in my life as I have

been all this morning: very unfit to be left alone, I am sure. Suppose

I were to be seized of a sudden in some dreadful way, and not able to

ring the bell! So, Lady Russell would not get out. I do not think she

has been in this house three times this summer.”

Anne said what was proper, and enquired after her husband. “Oh! Charles

is out shooting. I have not seen him since seven o’clock. He would go,

though I told him how ill I was. He said he should not stay out long;

but he has never come back, and now it is almost one. I assure you, I

have not seen a soul this whole long morning.”

“You have had your little boys with you?”

“Yes, as long as I could bear their noise; but they are so unmanageable

that they do me more harm than good. Little Charles does not mind a

word I say, and Walter is growing quite as bad.”

“Well, you will soon be better now,” replied Anne, cheerfully. “You

know I always cure you when I come. How are your neighbours at the

Great House?”

“I can give you no account of them. I have not seen one of them to-day,

except Mr Musgrove, who just stopped and spoke through the window, but

without getting off his horse; and though I told him how ill I was, not

one of them have been near me. It did not happen to suit the Miss

Musgroves, I suppose, and they never put themselves out of their way.”

“You will see them yet, perhaps, before the morning is gone. It is

early.”

“I never want them, I assure you. They talk and laugh a great deal too

much for me. Oh! Anne, I am so very unwell! It was quite unkind of you

not to come on Thursday.”

“My dear Mary, recollect what a comfortable account you sent me of

yourself! You wrote in the cheerfullest manner, and said you were

perfectly well, and in no hurry for me; and that being the case, you

must be aware that my wish would be to remain with Lady Russell to the

last: and besides what I felt on her account, I have really been so

busy, have had so much to do, that I could not very conveniently have

left Kellynch sooner.”

“Dear me! what can \_you\_ possibly have to do?”

“A great many things, I assure you. More than I can recollect in a

moment; but I can tell you some. I have been making a duplicate of the

catalogue of my father’s books and pictures. I have been several times

in the garden with Mackenzie, trying to understand, and make him

understand, which of Elizabeth’s plants are for Lady Russell. I have

had all my own little concerns to arrange, books and music to divide,

and all my trunks to repack, from not having understood in time what

was intended as to the waggons: and one thing I have had to do, Mary,

of a more trying nature: going to almost every house in the parish, as

a sort of take-leave. I was told that they wished it. But all these

things took up a great deal of time.”

“Oh! well!” and after a moment’s pause, “but you have never asked me

one word about our dinner at the Pooles yesterday.”

“Did you go then? I have made no enquiries, because I concluded you

must have been obliged to give up the party.”

“Oh yes! I went. I was very well yesterday; nothing at all the matter

with me till this morning. It would have been strange if I had not

gone.”

“I am very glad you were well enough, and I hope you had a pleasant

party.”

“Nothing remarkable. One always knows beforehand what the dinner will

be, and who will be there; and it is so very uncomfortable not having a

carriage of one’s own. Mr and Mrs Musgrove took me, and we were so

crowded! They are both so very large, and take up so much room; and Mr

Musgrove always sits forward. So, there was I, crowded into the back

seat with Henrietta and Louisa; and I think it very likely that my

illness to-day may be owing to it.”

A little further perseverance in patience and forced cheerfulness on

Anne’s side produced nearly a cure on Mary’s. She could soon sit

upright on the sofa, and began to hope she might be able to leave it by

dinner-time. Then, forgetting to think of it, she was at the other end

of the room, beautifying a nosegay; then, she ate her cold meat; and

then she was well enough to propose a little walk.

“Where shall we go?” said she, when they were ready. “I suppose you

will not like to call at the Great House before they have been to see

you?”

“I have not the smallest objection on that account,” replied Anne. “I

should never think of standing on such ceremony with people I know so

well as Mrs and the Miss Musgroves.”

“Oh! but they ought to call upon you as soon as possible. They ought to

feel what is due to you as \_my\_ sister. However, we may as well go and

sit with them a little while, and when we have that over, we can enjoy

our walk.”

Anne had always thought such a style of intercourse highly imprudent;

but she had ceased to endeavour to check it, from believing that,

though there were on each side continual subjects of offence, neither

family could now do without it. To the Great House accordingly they

went, to sit the full half hour in the old-fashioned square parlour,

with a small carpet and shining floor, to which the present daughters

of the house were gradually giving the proper air of confusion by a

grand piano-forte and a harp, flower-stands and little tables placed in

every direction. Oh! could the originals of the portraits against the

wainscot, could the gentlemen in brown velvet and the ladies in blue

satin have seen what was going on, have been conscious of such an

overthrow of all order and neatness! The portraits themselves seemed to

be staring in astonishment.

The Musgroves, like their houses, were in a state of alteration,

perhaps of improvement. The father and mother were in the old English

style, and the young people in the new. Mr and Mrs Musgrove were a very

good sort of people; friendly and hospitable, not much educated, and

not at all elegant. Their children had more modern minds and manners.

There was a numerous family; but the only two grown up, excepting

Charles, were Henrietta and Louisa, young ladies of nineteen and

twenty, who had brought from school at Exeter all the usual stock of

accomplishments, and were now like thousands of other young ladies,

living to be fashionable, happy, and merry. Their dress had every

advantage, their faces were rather pretty, their spirits extremely

good, their manner unembarrassed and pleasant; they were of consequence

at home, and favourites abroad. Anne always contemplated them as some

of the happiest creatures of her acquaintance; but still, saved as we

all are, by some comfortable feeling of superiority from wishing for

the possibility of exchange, she would not have given up her own more

elegant and cultivated mind for all their enjoyments; and envied them

nothing but that seemingly perfect good understanding and agreement

together, that good-humoured mutual affection, of which she had known

so little herself with either of her sisters.

They were received with great cordiality. Nothing seemed amiss on the

side of the Great House family, which was generally, as Anne very well

knew, the least to blame. The half hour was chatted away pleasantly

enough; and she was not at all surprised, at the end of it, to have

their walking party joined by both the Miss Musgroves, at Mary’s

particular invitation.

CHAPTER VI.

Anne had not wanted this visit to Uppercross, to learn that a removal

from one set of people to another, though at a distance of only three

miles, will often include a total change of conversation, opinion, and

idea. She had never been staying there before, without being struck by

it, or without wishing that other Elliots could have her advantage in

seeing how unknown, or unconsidered there, were the affairs which at

Kellynch Hall were treated as of such general publicity and pervading

interest; yet, with all this experience, she believed she must now

submit to feel that another lesson, in the art of knowing our own

nothingness beyond our own circle, was become necessary for her; for

certainly, coming as she did, with a heart full of the subject which

had been completely occupying both houses in Kellynch for many weeks,

she had expected rather more curiosity and sympathy than she found in

the separate but very similar remark of Mr and Mrs Musgrove: “So, Miss

Anne, Sir Walter and your sister are gone; and what part of Bath do you

think they will settle in?” and this, without much waiting for an

answer; or in the young ladies’ addition of, “I hope \_we\_ shall be in

Bath in the winter; but remember, papa, if we do go, we must be in a

good situation: none of your Queen Squares for us!” or in the anxious

supplement from Mary, of—“Upon my word, I shall be pretty well off,

when you are all gone away to be happy at Bath!”

She could only resolve to avoid such self-delusion in future, and think

with heightened gratitude of the extraordinary blessing of having one

such truly sympathising friend as Lady Russell.

The Mr Musgroves had their own game to guard, and to destroy, their own

horses, dogs, and newspapers to engage them, and the females were fully

occupied in all the other common subjects of housekeeping, neighbours,

dress, dancing, and music. She acknowledged it to be very fitting, that

every little social commonwealth should dictate its own matters of

discourse; and hoped, ere long, to become a not unworthy member of the

one she was now transplanted into. With the prospect of spending at

least two months at Uppercross, it was highly incumbent on her to

clothe her imagination, her memory, and all her ideas in as much of

Uppercross as possible.

She had no dread of these two months. Mary was not so repulsive and

unsisterly as Elizabeth, nor so inaccessible to all influence of hers;

neither was there anything among the other component parts of the

cottage inimical to comfort. She was always on friendly terms with her

brother-in-law; and in the children, who loved her nearly as well, and

respected her a great deal more than their mother, she had an object of

interest, amusement, and wholesome exertion.

Charles Musgrove was civil and agreeable; in sense and temper he was

undoubtedly superior to his wife, but not of powers, or conversation,

or grace, to make the past, as they were connected together, at all a

dangerous contemplation; though, at the same time, Anne could believe,

with Lady Russell, that a more equal match might have greatly improved

him; and that a woman of real understanding might have given more

consequence to his character, and more usefulness, rationality, and

elegance to his habits and pursuits. As it was, he did nothing with

much zeal, but sport; and his time was otherwise trifled away, without

benefit from books or anything else. He had very good spirits, which

never seemed much affected by his wife’s occasional lowness, bore with

her unreasonableness sometimes to Anne’s admiration, and upon the

whole, though there was very often a little disagreement (in which she

had sometimes more share than she wished, being appealed to by both

parties), they might pass for a happy couple. They were always

perfectly agreed in the want of more money, and a strong inclination

for a handsome present from his father; but here, as on most topics, he

had the superiority, for while Mary thought it a great shame that such

a present was not made, he always contended for his father’s having

many other uses for his money, and a right to spend it as he liked.

As to the management of their children, his theory was much better than

his wife’s, and his practice not so bad. “I could manage them very

well, if it were not for Mary’s interference,” was what Anne often

heard him say, and had a good deal of faith in; but when listening in

turn to Mary’s reproach of “Charles spoils the children so that I

cannot get them into any order,” she never had the smallest temptation

to say, “Very true.”

One of the least agreeable circumstances of her residence there was her

being treated with too much confidence by all parties, and being too

much in the secret of the complaints of each house. Known to have some

influence with her sister, she was continually requested, or at least

receiving hints to exert it, beyond what was practicable. “I wish you

could persuade Mary not to be always fancying herself ill,” was

Charles’s language; and, in an unhappy mood, thus spoke Mary: “I do

believe if Charles were to see me dying, he would not think there was

anything the matter with me. I am sure, Anne, if you would, you might

persuade him that I really am very ill—a great deal worse than I ever

own.”

Mary’s declaration was, “I hate sending the children to the Great

House, though their grandmamma is always wanting to see them, for she

humours and indulges them to such a degree, and gives them so much

trash and sweet things, that they are sure to come back sick and cross

for the rest of the day.” And Mrs Musgrove took the first opportunity

of being alone with Anne, to say, “Oh! Miss Anne, I cannot help wishing

Mrs Charles had a little of your method with those children. They are

quite different creatures with you! But to be sure, in general they are

so spoilt! It is a pity you cannot put your sister in the way of

managing them. They are as fine healthy children as ever were seen,

poor little dears! without partiality; but Mrs Charles knows no more

how they should be treated—! Bless me! how troublesome they are

sometimes. I assure you, Miss Anne, it prevents my wishing to see them

at our house so often as I otherwise should. I believe Mrs Charles is

not quite pleased with my not inviting them oftener; but you know it is

very bad to have children with one that one is obligated to be checking

every moment; “don’t do this,” and “don’t do that;” or that one can

only keep in tolerable order by more cake than is good for them.”

She had this communication, moreover, from Mary. “Mrs Musgrove thinks

all her servants so steady, that it would be high treason to call it in

question; but I am sure, without exaggeration, that her upper

house-maid and laundry-maid, instead of being in their business, are

gadding about the village, all day long. I meet them wherever I go; and

I declare, I never go twice into my nursery without seeing something of

them. If Jemima were not the trustiest, steadiest creature in the

world, it would be enough to spoil her; for she tells me, they are

always tempting her to take a walk with them.” And on Mrs Musgrove’s

side, it was, “I make a rule of never interfering in any of my

daughter-in-law’s concerns, for I know it would not do; but I shall

tell \_you\_, Miss Anne, because you may be able to set things to rights,

that I have no very good opinion of Mrs Charles’s nursery-maid: I hear

strange stories of her; she is always upon the gad; and from my own

knowledge, I can declare, she is such a fine-dressing lady, that she is

enough to ruin any servants she comes near. Mrs Charles quite swears by

her, I know; but I just give you this hint, that you may be upon the

watch; because, if you see anything amiss, you need not be afraid of

mentioning it.”

Again, it was Mary’s complaint, that Mrs Musgrove was very apt not to

give her the precedence that was her due, when they dined at the Great

House with other families; and she did not see any reason why she was

to be considered so much at home as to lose her place. And one day when

Anne was walking with only the Musgroves, one of them after talking of

rank, people of rank, and jealousy of rank, said, “I have no scruple of

observing to \_you\_, how nonsensical some persons are about their place,

because all the world knows how easy and indifferent you are about it;

but I wish anybody could give Mary a hint that it would be a great deal

better if she were not so very tenacious, especially if she would not

be always putting herself forward to take place of mamma. Nobody doubts

her right to have precedence of mamma, but it would be more becoming in

her not to be always insisting on it. It is not that mamma cares about

it the least in the world, but I know it is taken notice of by many

persons.”

How was Anne to set all these matters to rights? She could do little

more than listen patiently, soften every grievance, and excuse each to

the other; give them all hints of the forbearance necessary between

such near neighbours, and make those hints broadest which were meant

for her sister’s benefit.

In all other respects, her visit began and proceeded very well. Her own

spirits improved by change of place and subject, by being removed three

miles from Kellynch; Mary’s ailments lessened by having a constant

companion, and their daily intercourse with the other family, since

there was neither superior affection, confidence, nor employment in the

cottage, to be interrupted by it, was rather an advantage. It was

certainly carried nearly as far as possible, for they met every

morning, and hardly ever spent an evening asunder; but she believed

they should not have done so well without the sight of Mr and Mrs

Musgrove’s respectable forms in the usual places, or without the

talking, laughing, and singing of their daughters.

She played a great deal better than either of the Miss Musgroves, but

having no voice, no knowledge of the harp, and no fond parents, to sit

by and fancy themselves delighted, her performance was little thought

of, only out of civility, or to refresh the others, as she was well

aware. She knew that when she played she was giving pleasure only to

herself; but this was no new sensation. Excepting one short period of

her life, she had never, since the age of fourteen, never since the

loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or

encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste. In music she had

been always used to feel alone in the world; and Mr and Mrs Musgrove’s

fond partiality for their own daughters’ performance, and total

indifference to any other person’s, gave her much more pleasure for

their sakes, than mortification for her own.

The party at the Great House was sometimes increased by other company.

The neighbourhood was not large, but the Musgroves were visited by

everybody, and had more dinner-parties, and more callers, more visitors

by invitation and by chance, than any other family. They were more

completely popular.

The girls were wild for dancing; and the evenings ended, occasionally,

in an unpremeditated little ball. There was a family of cousins within

a walk of Uppercross, in less affluent circumstances, who depended on

the Musgroves for all their pleasures: they would come at any time, and

help play at anything, or dance anywhere; and Anne, very much

preferring the office of musician to a more active post, played country

dances to them by the hour together; a kindness which always

recommended her musical powers to the notice of Mr and Mrs Musgrove

more than anything else, and often drew this compliment;—“Well done,

Miss Anne! very well done indeed! Lord bless me! how those little

fingers of yours fly about!”

So passed the first three weeks. Michaelmas came; and now Anne’s heart

must be in Kellynch again. A beloved home made over to others; all the

precious rooms and furniture, groves, and prospects, beginning to own

other eyes and other limbs! She could not think of much else on the

29th of September; and she had this sympathetic touch in the evening

from Mary, who, on having occasion to note down the day of the month,

exclaimed, “Dear me, is not this the day the Crofts were to come to

Kellynch? I am glad I did not think of it before. How low it makes me!”

The Crofts took possession with true naval alertness, and were to be

visited. Mary deplored the necessity for herself. “Nobody knew how much

she should suffer. She should put it off as long as she could;” but was

not easy till she had talked Charles into driving her over on an early

day, and was in a very animated, comfortable state of imaginary

agitation, when she came back. Anne had very sincerely rejoiced in

there being no means of her going. She wished, however, to see the

Crofts, and was glad to be within when the visit was returned. They

came: the master of the house was not at home, but the two sisters were

together; and as it chanced that Mrs Croft fell to the share of Anne,

while the Admiral sat by Mary, and made himself very agreeable by his

good-humoured notice of her little boys, she was well able to watch for

a likeness, and if it failed her in the features, to catch it in the

voice, or in the turn of sentiment and expression.

Mrs Croft, though neither tall nor fat, had a squareness, uprightness,

and vigour of form, which gave importance to her person. She had bright

dark eyes, good teeth, and altogether an agreeable face; though her

reddened and weather-beaten complexion, the consequence of her having

been almost as much at sea as her husband, made her seem to have lived

some years longer in the world than her real eight-and-thirty. Her

manners were open, easy, and decided, like one who had no distrust of

herself, and no doubts of what to do; without any approach to

coarseness, however, or any want of good humour. Anne gave her credit,

indeed, for feelings of great consideration towards herself, in all

that related to Kellynch, and it pleased her: especially, as she had

satisfied herself in the very first half minute, in the instant even of

introduction, that there was not the smallest symptom of any knowledge

or suspicion on Mrs Croft’s side, to give a bias of any sort. She was

quite easy on that head, and consequently full of strength and courage,

till for a moment electrified by Mrs Croft’s suddenly saying,—

“It was you, and not your sister, I find, that my brother had the

pleasure of being acquainted with, when he was in this country.”

Anne hoped she had outlived the age of blushing; but the age of emotion

she certainly had not.

“Perhaps you may not have heard that he is married?” added Mrs Croft.

She could now answer as she ought; and was happy to feel, when Mrs

Croft’s next words explained it to be Mr Wentworth of whom she spoke,

that she had said nothing which might not do for either brother. She

immediately felt how reasonable it was, that Mrs Croft should be

thinking and speaking of Edward, and not of Frederick; and with shame

at her own forgetfulness applied herself to the knowledge of their

former neighbour’s present state with proper interest.

The rest was all tranquillity; till, just as they were moving, she

heard the Admiral say to Mary—

“We are expecting a brother of Mrs Croft’s here soon; I dare say you

know him by name.”

He was cut short by the eager attacks of the little boys, clinging to

him like an old friend, and declaring he should not go; and being too

much engrossed by proposals of carrying them away in his coat pockets,

&c., to have another moment for finishing or recollecting what he had

begun, Anne was left to persuade herself, as well as she could, that

the same brother must still be in question. She could not, however,

reach such a degree of certainty, as not to be anxious to hear whether

anything had been said on the subject at the other house, where the

Crofts had previously been calling.

The folks of the Great House were to spend the evening of this day at

the Cottage; and it being now too late in the year for such visits to

be made on foot, the coach was beginning to be listened for, when the

youngest Miss Musgrove walked in. That she was coming to apologize, and

that they should have to spend the evening by themselves, was the first

black idea; and Mary was quite ready to be affronted, when Louisa made

all right by saying, that she only came on foot, to leave more room for

the harp, which was bringing in the carriage.

“And I will tell you our reason,” she added, “and all about it. I am

come on to give you notice, that papa and mamma are out of spirits this

evening, especially mamma; she is thinking so much of poor Richard! And

we agreed it would be best to have the harp, for it seems to amuse her

more than the piano-forte. I will tell you why she is out of spirits.

When the Crofts called this morning, (they called here afterwards, did

not they?), they happened to say, that her brother, Captain Wentworth,

is just returned to England, or paid off, or something, and is coming

to see them almost directly; and most unluckily it came into mamma’s

head, when they were gone, that Wentworth, or something very like it,

was the name of poor Richard’s captain at one time; I do not know when

or where, but a great while before he died, poor fellow! And upon

looking over his letters and things, she found it was so, and is

perfectly sure that this must be the very man, and her head is quite

full of it, and of poor Richard! So we must be as merry as we can, that

she may not be dwelling upon such gloomy things.”

The real circumstances of this pathetic piece of family history were,

that the Musgroves had had the ill fortune of a very troublesome,

hopeless son; and the good fortune to lose him before he reached his

twentieth year; that he had been sent to sea because he was stupid and

unmanageable on shore; that he had been very little cared for at any

time by his family, though quite as much as he deserved; seldom heard

of, and scarcely at all regretted, when the intelligence of his death

abroad had worked its way to Uppercross, two years before.

He had, in fact, though his sisters were now doing all they could for

him, by calling him “poor Richard,” been nothing better than a

thick-headed, unfeeling, unprofitable Dick Musgrove, who had never done

anything to entitle himself to more than the abbreviation of his name,

living or dead.

He had been several years at sea, and had, in the course of those

removals to which all midshipmen are liable, and especially such

midshipmen as every captain wishes to get rid of, been six months on

board Captain Frederick Wentworth’s frigate, the Laconia; and from the

Laconia he had, under the influence of his captain, written the only

two letters which his father and mother had ever received from him

during the whole of his absence; that is to say, the only two

disinterested letters; all the rest had been mere applications for

money.

In each letter he had spoken well of his captain; but yet, so little

were they in the habit of attending to such matters, so unobservant and

incurious were they as to the names of men or ships, that it had made

scarcely any impression at the time; and that Mrs Musgrove should have

been suddenly struck, this very day, with a recollection of the name of

Wentworth, as connected with her son, seemed one of those extraordinary

bursts of mind which do sometimes occur.

She had gone to her letters, and found it all as she supposed; and the

re-perusal of these letters, after so long an interval, her poor son

gone for ever, and all the strength of his faults forgotten, had

affected her spirits exceedingly, and thrown her into greater grief for

him than she had known on first hearing of his death. Mr Musgrove was,

in a lesser degree, affected likewise; and when they reached the

cottage, they were evidently in want, first, of being listened to anew

on this subject, and afterwards, of all the relief which cheerful

companions could give them.

To hear them talking so much of Captain Wentworth, repeating his name

so often, puzzling over past years, and at last ascertaining that it

\_might\_, that it probably \_would\_, turn out to be the very same Captain

Wentworth whom they recollected meeting, once or twice, after their

coming back from Clifton—a very fine young man—but they could not say

whether it was seven or eight years ago, was a new sort of trial to

Anne’s nerves. She found, however, that it was one to which she must

inure herself. Since he actually was expected in the country, she must

teach herself to be insensible on such points. And not only did it

appear that he was expected, and speedily, but the Musgroves, in their

warm gratitude for the kindness he had shewn poor Dick, and very high

respect for his character, stamped as it was by poor Dick’s having been

six months under his care, and mentioning him in strong, though not

perfectly well-spelt praise, as “a fine dashing felow, only two

perticular about the schoolmaster,” were bent on introducing

themselves, and seeking his acquaintance, as soon as they could hear of

his arrival.

The resolution of doing so helped to form the comfort of their evening.

CHAPTER VII.

A very few days more, and Captain Wentworth was known to be at

Kellynch, and Mr Musgrove had called on him, and come back warm in his

praise, and he was engaged with the Crofts to dine at Uppercross, by

the end of another week. It had been a great disappointment to Mr

Musgrove to find that no earlier day could be fixed, so impatient was

he to shew his gratitude, by seeing Captain Wentworth under his own

roof, and welcoming him to all that was strongest and best in his

cellars. But a week must pass; only a week, in Anne’s reckoning, and

then, she supposed, they must meet; and soon she began to wish that she

could feel secure even for a week.

Captain Wentworth made a very early return to Mr Musgrove’s civility,

and she was all but calling there in the same half hour. She and Mary

were actually setting forward for the Great House, where, as she

afterwards learnt, they must inevitably have found him, when they were

stopped by the eldest boy’s being at that moment brought home in

consequence of a bad fall. The child’s situation put the visit entirely

aside; but she could not hear of her escape with indifference, even in

the midst of the serious anxiety which they afterwards felt on his

account.

His collar-bone was found to be dislocated, and such injury received in

the back, as roused the most alarming ideas. It was an afternoon of

distress, and Anne had every thing to do at once; the apothecary to

send for, the father to have pursued and informed, the mother to

support and keep from hysterics, the servants to control, the youngest

child to banish, and the poor suffering one to attend and soothe;

besides sending, as soon as she recollected it, proper notice to the

other house, which brought her an accession rather of frightened,

enquiring companions, than of very useful assistants.

Her brother’s return was the first comfort; he could take best care of

his wife; and the second blessing was the arrival of the apothecary.

Till he came and had examined the child, their apprehensions were the

worse for being vague; they suspected great injury, but knew not where;

but now the collar-bone was soon replaced, and though Mr Robinson felt

and felt, and rubbed, and looked grave, and spoke low words both to the

father and the aunt, still they were all to hope the best, and to be

able to part and eat their dinner in tolerable ease of mind; and then

it was, just before they parted, that the two young aunts were able so

far to digress from their nephew’s state, as to give the information of

Captain Wentworth’s visit; staying five minutes behind their father and

mother, to endeavour to express how perfectly delighted they were with

him, how much handsomer, how infinitely more agreeable they thought him

than any individual among their male acquaintance, who had been at all

a favourite before. How glad they had been to hear papa invite him to

stay dinner, how sorry when he said it was quite out of his power, and

how glad again when he had promised in reply to papa and mamma’s

farther pressing invitations to come and dine with them on the

morrow—actually on the morrow; and he had promised it in so pleasant a

manner, as if he felt all the motive of their attention just as he

ought. And in short, he had looked and said everything with such

exquisite grace, that they could assure them all, their heads were both

turned by him; and off they ran, quite as full of glee as of love, and

apparently more full of Captain Wentworth than of little Charles.

The same story and the same raptures were repeated, when the two girls

came with their father, through the gloom of the evening, to make

enquiries; and Mr Musgrove, no longer under the first uneasiness about

his heir, could add his confirmation and praise, and hope there would

be now no occasion for putting Captain Wentworth off, and only be sorry

to think that the cottage party, probably, would not like to leave the

little boy, to give him the meeting. “Oh no; as to leaving the little

boy,” both father and mother were in much too strong and recent alarm

to bear the thought; and Anne, in the joy of the escape, could not help

adding her warm protestations to theirs.

Charles Musgrove, indeed, afterwards, shewed more of inclination; “the

child was going on so well, and he wished so much to be introduced to

Captain Wentworth, that, perhaps, he might join them in the evening; he

would not dine from home, but he might walk in for half an hour.” But

in this he was eagerly opposed by his wife, with “Oh! no, indeed,

Charles, I cannot bear to have you go away. Only think if anything

should happen?”

The child had a good night, and was going on well the next day. It must

be a work of time to ascertain that no injury had been done to the

spine; but Mr Robinson found nothing to increase alarm, and Charles

Musgrove began, consequently, to feel no necessity for longer

confinement. The child was to be kept in bed and amused as quietly as

possible; but what was there for a father to do? This was quite a

female case, and it would be highly absurd in him, who could be of no

use at home, to shut himself up. His father very much wished him to

meet Captain Wentworth, and there being no sufficient reason against

it, he ought to go; and it ended in his making a bold, public

declaration, when he came in from shooting, of his meaning to dress

directly, and dine at the other house.

“Nothing can be going on better than the child,” said he; “so I told my

father, just now, that I would come, and he thought me quite right.

Your sister being with you, my love, I have no scruple at all. You

would not like to leave him yourself, but you see I can be of no use.

Anne will send for me if anything is the matter.”

Husbands and wives generally understand when opposition will be vain.

Mary knew, from Charles’s manner of speaking, that he was quite

determined on going, and that it would be of no use to teaze him. She

said nothing, therefore, till he was out of the room, but as soon as

there was only Anne to hear—

“So you and I are to be left to shift by ourselves, with this poor sick

child; and not a creature coming near us all the evening! I knew how it

would be. This is always my luck. If there is anything disagreeable

going on men are always sure to get out of it, and Charles is as bad as

any of them. Very unfeeling! I must say it is very unfeeling of him to

be running away from his poor little boy. Talks of his being going on

so well! How does he know that he is going on well, or that there may

not be a sudden change half an hour hence? I did not think Charles

would have been so unfeeling. So here he is to go away and enjoy

himself, and because I am the poor mother, I am not to be allowed to

stir; and yet, I am sure, I am more unfit than anybody else to be about

the child. My being the mother is the very reason why my feelings

should not be tried. I am not at all equal to it. You saw how

hysterical I was yesterday.”

“But that was only the effect of the suddenness of your alarm—of the

shock. You will not be hysterical again. I dare say we shall have

nothing to distress us. I perfectly understand Mr Robinson’s

directions, and have no fears; and indeed, Mary, I cannot wonder at

your husband. Nursing does not belong to a man; it is not his province.

A sick child is always the mother’s property: her own feelings

generally make it so.”

“I hope I am as fond of my child as any mother, but I do not know that

I am of any more use in the sick-room than Charles, for I cannot be

always scolding and teazing the poor child when it is ill; and you saw,

this morning, that if I told him to keep quiet, he was sure to begin

kicking about. I have not nerves for the sort of thing.”

“But, could you be comfortable yourself, to be spending the whole

evening away from the poor boy?”

“Yes; you see his papa can, and why should not I? Jemima is so careful;

and she could send us word every hour how he was. I really think

Charles might as well have told his father we would all come. I am not

more alarmed about little Charles now than he is. I was dreadfully

alarmed yesterday, but the case is very different to-day.”

“Well, if you do not think it too late to give notice for yourself,

suppose you were to go, as well as your husband. Leave little Charles

to my care. Mr and Mrs Musgrove cannot think it wrong while I remain

with him.”

“Are you serious?” cried Mary, her eyes brightening. “Dear me! that’s a

very good thought, very good, indeed. To be sure, I may just as well go

as not, for I am of no use at home—am I? and it only harasses me. You,

who have not a mother’s feelings, are a great deal the properest

person. You can make little Charles do anything; he always minds you at

a word. It will be a great deal better than leaving him only with

Jemima. Oh! I shall certainly go; I am sure I ought if I can, quite as

much as Charles, for they want me excessively to be acquainted with

Captain Wentworth, and I know you do not mind being left alone. An

excellent thought of yours, indeed, Anne. I will go and tell Charles,

and get ready directly. You can send for us, you know, at a moment’s

notice, if anything is the matter; but I dare say there will be nothing

to alarm you. I should not go, you may be sure, if I did not feel quite

at ease about my dear child.”

The next moment she was tapping at her husband’s dressing-room door,

and as Anne followed her up stairs, she was in time for the whole

conversation, which began with Mary’s saying, in a tone of great

exultation—

“I mean to go with you, Charles, for I am of no more use at home than

you are. If I were to shut myself up for ever with the child, I should

not be able to persuade him to do anything he did not like. Anne will

stay; Anne undertakes to stay at home and take care of him. It is

Anne’s own proposal, and so I shall go with you, which will be a great

deal better, for I have not dined at the other house since Tuesday.”

“This is very kind of Anne,” was her husband’s answer, “and I should be

very glad to have you go; but it seems rather hard that she should be

left at home by herself, to nurse our sick child.”

Anne was now at hand to take up her own cause, and the sincerity of her

manner being soon sufficient to convince him, where conviction was at

least very agreeable, he had no farther scruples as to her being left

to dine alone, though he still wanted her to join them in the evening,

when the child might be at rest for the night, and kindly urged her to

let him come and fetch her, but she was quite unpersuadable; and this

being the case, she had ere long the pleasure of seeing them set off

together in high spirits. They were gone, she hoped, to be happy,

however oddly constructed such happiness might seem; as for herself,

she was left with as many sensations of comfort, as were, perhaps, ever

likely to be hers. She knew herself to be of the first utility to the

child; and what was it to her if Frederick Wentworth were only half a

mile distant, making himself agreeable to others?

She would have liked to know how he felt as to a meeting. Perhaps

indifferent, if indifference could exist under such circumstances. He

must be either indifferent or unwilling. Had he wished ever to see her

again, he need not have waited till this time; he would have done what

she could not but believe that in his place she should have done long

ago, when events had been early giving him the independence which alone

had been wanting.

Her brother and sister came back delighted with their new acquaintance,

and their visit in general. There had been music, singing, talking,

laughing, all that was most agreeable; charming manners in Captain

Wentworth, no shyness or reserve; they seemed all to know each other

perfectly, and he was coming the very next morning to shoot with

Charles. He was to come to breakfast, but not at the Cottage, though

that had been proposed at first; but then he had been pressed to come

to the Great House instead, and he seemed afraid of being in Mrs

Charles Musgrove’s way, on account of the child, and therefore,

somehow, they hardly knew how, it ended in Charles’s being to meet him

to breakfast at his father’s.

Anne understood it. He wished to avoid seeing her. He had inquired

after her, she found, slightly, as might suit a former slight

acquaintance, seeming to acknowledge such as she had acknowledged,

actuated, perhaps, by the same view of escaping introduction when they

were to meet.

The morning hours of the Cottage were always later than those of the

other house, and on the morrow the difference was so great that Mary

and Anne were not more than beginning breakfast when Charles came in to

say that they were just setting off, that he was come for his dogs,

that his sisters were following with Captain Wentworth; his sisters

meaning to visit Mary and the child, and Captain Wentworth proposing

also to wait on her for a few minutes if not inconvenient; and though

Charles had answered for the child’s being in no such state as could

make it inconvenient, Captain Wentworth would not be satisfied without

his running on to give notice.

Mary, very much gratified by this attention, was delighted to receive

him, while a thousand feelings rushed on Anne, of which this was the

most consoling, that it would soon be over. And it was soon over. In

two minutes after Charles’s preparation, the others appeared; they were

in the drawing-room. Her eye half met Captain Wentworth’s, a bow, a

curtsey passed; she heard his voice; he talked to Mary, said all that

was right, said something to the Miss Musgroves, enough to mark an easy

footing; the room seemed full, full of persons and voices, but a few

minutes ended it. Charles shewed himself at the window, all was ready,

their visitor had bowed and was gone, the Miss Musgroves were gone too,

suddenly resolving to walk to the end of the village with the

sportsmen: the room was cleared, and Anne might finish her breakfast as

she could.

“It is over! it is over!” she repeated to herself again and again, in

nervous gratitude. “The worst is over!”

Mary talked, but she could not attend. She had seen him. They had met.

They had been once more in the same room.

Soon, however, she began to reason with herself, and try to be feeling

less. Eight years, almost eight years had passed, since all had been

given up. How absurd to be resuming the agitation which such an

interval had banished into distance and indistinctness! What might not

eight years do? Events of every description, changes, alienations,

removals—all, all must be comprised in it, and oblivion of the past—

how natural, how certain too! It included nearly a third part of her

own life.

Alas! with all her reasoning, she found, that to retentive feelings

eight years may be little more than nothing.

Now, how were his sentiments to be read? Was this like wishing to avoid

her? And the next moment she was hating herself for the folly which

asked the question.

On one other question which perhaps her utmost wisdom might not have

prevented, she was soon spared all suspense; for, after the Miss

Musgroves had returned and finished their visit at the Cottage she had

this spontaneous information from Mary:—

“Captain Wentworth is not very gallant by you, Anne, though he was so

attentive to me. Henrietta asked him what he thought of you, when they

went away, and he said, ‘You were so altered he should not have known

you again.’”

Mary had no feelings to make her respect her sister’s in a common way,

but she was perfectly unsuspicious of being inflicting any peculiar

wound.

“Altered beyond his knowledge.” Anne fully submitted, in silent, deep

mortification. Doubtless it was so, and she could take no revenge, for

he was not altered, or not for the worse. She had already acknowledged

it to herself, and she could not think differently, let him think of

her as he would. No: the years which had destroyed her youth and bloom

had only given him a more glowing, manly, open look, in no respect

lessening his personal advantages. She had seen the same Frederick

Wentworth.

“So altered that he should not have known her again!” These were words

which could not but dwell with her. Yet she soon began to rejoice that

she had heard them. They were of sobering tendency; they allayed

agitation; they composed, and consequently must make her happier.

Frederick Wentworth had used such words, or something like them, but

without an idea that they would be carried round to her. He had thought

her wretchedly altered, and in the first moment of appeal, had spoken

as he felt. He had not forgiven Anne Elliot. She had used him ill,

deserted and disappointed him; and worse, she had shewn a feebleness of

character in doing so, which his own decided, confident temper could

not endure. She had given him up to oblige others. It had been the

effect of over-persuasion. It had been weakness and timidity.

He had been most warmly attached to her, and had never seen a woman

since whom he thought her equal; but, except from some natural

sensation of curiosity, he had no desire of meeting her again. Her

power with him was gone for ever.

It was now his object to marry. He was rich, and being turned on shore,

fully intended to settle as soon as he could be properly tempted;

actually looking round, ready to fall in love with all the speed which

a clear head and a quick taste could allow. He had a heart for either

of the Miss Musgroves, if they could catch it; a heart, in short, for

any pleasing young woman who came in his way, excepting Anne Elliot.

This was his only secret exception, when he said to his sister, in

answer to her suppositions:—

“Yes, here I am, Sophia, quite ready to make a foolish match. Anybody

between fifteen and thirty may have me for asking. A little beauty, and

a few smiles, and a few compliments to the navy, and I am a lost man.

Should not this be enough for a sailor, who has had no society among

women to make him nice?”

He said it, she knew, to be contradicted. His bright proud eye spoke

the conviction that he was nice; and Anne Elliot was not out of his

thoughts, when he more seriously described the woman he should wish to

meet with. “A strong mind, with sweetness of manner,” made the first

and the last of the description.

“That is the woman I want,” said he. “Something a little inferior I

shall of course put up with, but it must not be much. If I am a fool, I

shall be a fool indeed, for I have thought on the subject more than

most men.”

CHAPTER VIII.

From this time Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot were repeatedly in the

same circle. They were soon dining in company together at Mr

Musgrove’s, for the little boy’s state could no longer supply his aunt

with a pretence for absenting herself; and this was but the beginning

of other dinings and other meetings.

Whether former feelings were to be renewed must be brought to the

proof; former times must undoubtedly be brought to the recollection of

each; \_they\_ could not but be reverted to; the year of their engagement

could not but be named by him, in the little narratives or descriptions

which conversation called forth. His profession qualified him, his

disposition lead him, to talk; and “\_That\_ was in the year six;”

“\_That\_ happened before I went to sea in the year six,” occurred in the

course of the first evening they spent together: and though his voice

did not falter, and though she had no reason to suppose his eye

wandering towards her while he spoke, Anne felt the utter

impossibility, from her knowledge of his mind, that he could be

unvisited by remembrance any more than herself. There must be the same

immediate association of thought, though she was very far from

conceiving it to be of equal pain.

They had no conversation together, no intercourse but what the

commonest civility required. Once so much to each other! Now nothing!

There \_had\_ been a time, when of all the large party now filling the

drawing-room at Uppercross, they would have found it most difficult to

cease to speak to one another. With the exception, perhaps, of Admiral

and Mrs Croft, who seemed particularly attached and happy, (Anne could

allow no other exceptions even among the married couples), there could

have been no two hearts so open, no tastes so similar, no feelings so

in unison, no countenances so beloved. Now they were as strangers; nay,

worse than strangers, for they could never become acquainted. It was a

perpetual estrangement.

When he talked, she heard the same voice, and discerned the same mind.

There was a very general ignorance of all naval matters throughout the

party; and he was very much questioned, and especially by the two Miss

Musgroves, who seemed hardly to have any eyes but for him, as to the

manner of living on board, daily regulations, food, hours, &c., and

their surprise at his accounts, at learning the degree of accommodation

and arrangement which was practicable, drew from him some pleasant

ridicule, which reminded Anne of the early days when she too had been

ignorant, and she too had been accused of supposing sailors to be

living on board without anything to eat, or any cook to dress it if

there were, or any servant to wait, or any knife and fork to use.

From thus listening and thinking, she was roused by a whisper of Mrs

Musgrove’s who, overcome by fond regrets, could not help saying—

“Ah! Miss Anne, if it had pleased Heaven to spare my poor son, I dare

say he would have been just such another by this time.”

Anne suppressed a smile, and listened kindly, while Mrs Musgrove

relieved her heart a little more; and for a few minutes, therefore,

could not keep pace with the conversation of the others.

When she could let her attention take its natural course again, she

found the Miss Musgroves just fetching the Navy List (their own navy

list, the first that had ever been at Uppercross), and sitting down

together to pore over it, with the professed view of finding out the

ships that Captain Wentworth had commanded.

“Your first was the Asp, I remember; we will look for the Asp.”

“You will not find her there. Quite worn out and broken up. I was the

last man who commanded her. Hardly fit for service then. Reported fit

for home service for a year or two, and so I was sent off to the West

Indies.”

The girls looked all amazement.

“The Admiralty,” he continued, “entertain themselves now and then, with

sending a few hundred men to sea, in a ship not fit to be employed. But

they have a great many to provide for; and among the thousands that may

just as well go to the bottom as not, it is impossible for them to

distinguish the very set who may be least missed.”

“Phoo! phoo!” cried the Admiral, “what stuff these young fellows talk!

Never was a better sloop than the Asp in her day. For an old built

sloop, you would not see her equal. Lucky fellow to get her! He knows

there must have been twenty better men than himself applying for her at

the same time. Lucky fellow to get anything so soon, with no more

interest than his.”

“I felt my luck, Admiral, I assure you;” replied Captain Wentworth,

seriously. “I was as well satisfied with my appointment as you can

desire. It was a great object with me at that time to be at sea; a very

great object, I wanted to be doing something.”

“To be sure you did. What should a young fellow like you do ashore for

half a year together? If a man had not a wife, he soon wants to be

afloat again.”

“But, Captain Wentworth,” cried Louisa, “how vexed you must have been

when you came to the Asp, to see what an old thing they had given you.”

“I knew pretty well what she was before that day;” said he, smiling. “I

had no more discoveries to make than you would have as to the fashion

and strength of any old pelisse, which you had seen lent about among

half your acquaintance ever since you could remember, and which at

last, on some very wet day, is lent to yourself. Ah! she was a dear old

Asp to me. She did all that I wanted. I knew she would. I knew that we

should either go to the bottom together, or that she would be the

making of me; and I never had two days of foul weather all the time I

was at sea in her; and after taking privateers enough to be very

entertaining, I had the good luck in my passage home the next autumn,

to fall in with the very French frigate I wanted. I brought her into

Plymouth; and here another instance of luck. We had not been six hours

in the Sound, when a gale came on, which lasted four days and nights,

and which would have done for poor old Asp in half the time; our touch

with the Great Nation not having much improved our condition.

Four-and-twenty hours later, and I should only have been a gallant

Captain Wentworth, in a small paragraph at one corner of the

newspapers; and being lost in only a sloop, nobody would have thought

about me.” Anne’s shudderings were to herself alone; but the Miss

Musgroves could be as open as they were sincere, in their exclamations

of pity and horror.

“And so then, I suppose,” said Mrs Musgrove, in a low voice, as if

thinking aloud, “so then he went away to the Laconia, and there he met

with our poor boy. Charles, my dear,” (beckoning him to her), “do ask

Captain Wentworth where it was he first met with your poor brother. I

always forgot.”

“It was at Gibraltar, mother, I know. Dick had been left ill at

Gibraltar, with a recommendation from his former captain to Captain

Wentworth.”

“Oh! but, Charles, tell Captain Wentworth, he need not be afraid of

mentioning poor Dick before me, for it would be rather a pleasure to

hear him talked of by such a good friend.”

Charles, being somewhat more mindful of the probabilities of the case,

only nodded in reply, and walked away.

The girls were now hunting for the Laconia; and Captain Wentworth could

not deny himself the pleasure of taking the precious volume into his

own hands to save them the trouble, and once more read aloud the little

statement of her name and rate, and present non-commissioned class,

observing over it that she too had been one of the best friends man

ever had.

“Ah! those were pleasant days when I had the Laconia! How fast I made

money in her. A friend of mine and I had such a lovely cruise together

off the Western Islands. Poor Harville, sister! You know how much he

wanted money: worse than myself. He had a wife. Excellent fellow. I

shall never forget his happiness. He felt it all, so much for her sake.

I wished for him again the next summer, when I had still the same luck

in the Mediterranean.”

“And I am sure, Sir,” said Mrs Musgrove, “it was a lucky day for \_us\_,

when you were put captain into that ship. \_We\_ shall never forget what

you did.”

Her feelings made her speak low; and Captain Wentworth, hearing only in

part, and probably not having Dick Musgrove at all near his thoughts,

looked rather in suspense, and as if waiting for more.

“My brother,” whispered one of the girls; “mamma is thinking of poor

Richard.”

“Poor dear fellow!” continued Mrs Musgrove; “he was grown so steady,

and such an excellent correspondent, while he was under your care! Ah!

it would have been a happy thing, if he had never left you. I assure

you, Captain Wentworth, we are very sorry he ever left you.”

There was a momentary expression in Captain Wentworth’s face at this

speech, a certain glance of his bright eye, and curl of his handsome

mouth, which convinced Anne, that instead of sharing in Mrs Musgrove’s

kind wishes, as to her son, he had probably been at some pains to get

rid of him; but it was too transient an indulgence of self-amusement to

be detected by any who understood him less than herself; in another

moment he was perfectly collected and serious, and almost instantly

afterwards coming up to the sofa, on which she and Mrs Musgrove were

sitting, took a place by the latter, and entered into conversation with

her, in a low voice, about her son, doing it with so much sympathy and

natural grace, as shewed the kindest consideration for all that was

real and unabsurd in the parent’s feelings.

They were actually on the same sofa, for Mrs Musgrove had most readily

made room for him; they were divided only by Mrs Musgrove. It was no

insignificant barrier, indeed. Mrs Musgrove was of a comfortable,

substantial size, infinitely more fitted by nature to express good

cheer and good humour, than tenderness and sentiment; and while the

agitations of Anne’s slender form, and pensive face, may be considered

as very completely screened, Captain Wentworth should be allowed some

credit for the self-command with which he attended to her large fat

sighings over the destiny of a son, whom alive nobody had cared for.

Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary

proportions. A large bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep

affliction, as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But, fair

or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will

patronize in vain—which taste cannot tolerate—which ridicule will

seize.

The Admiral, after taking two or three refreshing turns about the room

with his hands behind him, being called to order by his wife, now came

up to Captain Wentworth, and without any observation of what he might

be interrupting, thinking only of his own thoughts, began with—

“If you had been a week later at Lisbon, last spring, Frederick, you

would have been asked to give a passage to Lady Mary Grierson and her

daughters.”

“Should I? I am glad I was not a week later then.”

The Admiral abused him for his want of gallantry. He defended himself;

though professing that he would never willingly admit any ladies on

board a ship of his, excepting for a ball, or a visit, which a few

hours might comprehend.

“But, if I know myself,” said he, “this is from no want of gallantry

towards them. It is rather from feeling how impossible it is, with all

one’s efforts, and all one’s sacrifices, to make the accommodations on

board such as women ought to have. There can be no want of gallantry,

Admiral, in rating the claims of women to every personal comfort

\_high\_, and this is what I do. I hate to hear of women on board, or to

see them on board; and no ship under my command shall ever convey a

family of ladies anywhere, if I can help it.”

This brought his sister upon him.

“Oh! Frederick! But I cannot believe it of you.—All idle

refinement!—Women may be as comfortable on board, as in the best house

in England. I believe I have lived as much on board as most women, and

I know nothing superior to the accommodations of a man-of-war. I

declare I have not a comfort or an indulgence about me, even at

Kellynch Hall,” (with a kind bow to Anne), “beyond what I always had in

most of the ships I have lived in; and they have been five altogether.”

“Nothing to the purpose,” replied her brother. “You were living with

your husband, and were the only woman on board.”

“But you, yourself, brought Mrs Harville, her sister, her cousin, and

three children, round from Portsmouth to Plymouth. Where was this

superfine, extraordinary sort of gallantry of yours then?”

“All merged in my friendship, Sophia. I would assist any brother

officer’s wife that I could, and I would bring anything of Harville’s

from the world’s end, if he wanted it. But do not imagine that I did

not feel it an evil in itself.”

“Depend upon it, they were all perfectly comfortable.”

“I might not like them the better for that perhaps. Such a number of

women and children have no \_right\_ to be comfortable on board.”

“My dear Frederick, you are talking quite idly. Pray, what would become

of us poor sailors’ wives, who often want to be conveyed to one port or

another, after our husbands, if everybody had your feelings?”

“My feelings, you see, did not prevent my taking Mrs Harville and all

her family to Plymouth.”

“But I hate to hear you talking so like a fine gentleman, and as if

women were all fine ladies, instead of rational creatures. We none of

us expect to be in smooth water all our days.”

“Ah! my dear,” said the Admiral, “when he has got a wife, he will sing

a different tune. When he is married, if we have the good luck to live

to another war, we shall see him do as you and I, and a great many

others, have done. We shall have him very thankful to anybody that will

bring him his wife.”

“Ay, that we shall.”

“Now I have done,” cried Captain Wentworth. “When once married people

begin to attack me with,—‘Oh! you will think very differently, when you

are married.’ I can only say, ‘No, I shall not;’ and then they say

again, ‘Yes, you will,’ and there is an end of it.”

He got up and moved away.

“What a great traveller you must have been, ma’am!” said Mrs Musgrove

to Mrs Croft.

“Pretty well, ma’am, in the fifteen years of my marriage; though many

women have done more. I have crossed the Atlantic four times, and have

been once to the East Indies, and back again, and only once; besides

being in different places about home: Cork, and Lisbon, and Gibraltar.

But I never went beyond the Streights, and never was in the West

Indies. We do not call Bermuda or Bahama, you know, the West Indies.”

Mrs Musgrove had not a word to say in dissent; she could not accuse

herself of having ever called them anything in the whole course of her

life.

“And I do assure you, ma’am,” pursued Mrs Croft, “that nothing can

exceed the accommodations of a man-of-war; I speak, you know, of the

higher rates. When you come to a frigate, of course, you are more

confined; though any reasonable woman may be perfectly happy in one of

them; and I can safely say, that the happiest part of my life has been

spent on board a ship. While we were together, you know, there was

nothing to be feared. Thank God! I have always been blessed with

excellent health, and no climate disagrees with me. A little disordered

always the first twenty-four hours of going to sea, but never knew what

sickness was afterwards. The only time I ever really suffered in body

or mind, the only time that I ever fancied myself unwell, or had any

ideas of danger, was the winter that I passed by myself at Deal, when

the Admiral (\_Captain\_ Croft then) was in the North Seas. I lived in

perpetual fright at that time, and had all manner of imaginary

complaints from not knowing what to do with myself, or when I should

hear from him next; but as long as we could be together, nothing ever

ailed me, and I never met with the smallest inconvenience.”

“Aye, to be sure. Yes, indeed, oh yes! I am quite of your opinion, Mrs

Croft,” was Mrs Musgrove’s hearty answer. “There is nothing so bad as a

separation. I am quite of your opinion. \_I\_ know what it is, for Mr

Musgrove always attends the assizes, and I am so glad when they are

over, and he is safe back again.”

The evening ended with dancing. On its being proposed, Anne offered her

services, as usual; and though her eyes would sometimes fill with tears

as she sat at the instrument, she was extremely glad to be employed,

and desired nothing in return but to be unobserved.

It was a merry, joyous party, and no one seemed in higher spirits than

Captain Wentworth. She felt that he had every thing to elevate him

which general attention and deference, and especially the attention of

all the young women, could do. The Miss Hayters, the females of the

family of cousins already mentioned, were apparently admitted to the

honour of being in love with him; and as for Henrietta and Louisa, they

both seemed so entirely occupied by him, that nothing but the continued

appearance of the most perfect good-will between themselves could have

made it credible that they were not decided rivals. If he were a little

spoilt by such universal, such eager admiration, who could wonder?

These were some of the thoughts which occupied Anne, while her fingers

were mechanically at work, proceeding for half an hour together,

equally without error, and without consciousness. \_Once\_ she felt that

he was looking at herself, observing her altered features, perhaps,

trying to trace in them the ruins of the face which had once charmed

him; and \_once\_ she knew that he must have spoken of her; she was

hardly aware of it, till she heard the answer; but then she was sure of

his having asked his partner whether Miss Elliot never danced? The

answer was, “Oh, no; never; she has quite given up dancing. She had

rather play. She is never tired of playing.” Once, too, he spoke to

her. She had left the instrument on the dancing being over, and he had

sat down to try to make out an air which he wished to give the Miss

Musgroves an idea of. Unintentionally she returned to that part of the

room; he saw her, and, instantly rising, said, with studied politeness—

“I beg your pardon, madam, this is your seat;” and though she

immediately drew back with a decided negative, he was not to be induced

to sit down again.

Anne did not wish for more of such looks and speeches. His cold

politeness, his ceremonious grace, were worse than anything.

CHAPTER IX.

Captain Wentworth was come to Kellynch as to a home, to stay as long as

he liked, being as thoroughly the object of the Admiral’s fraternal

kindness as of his wife’s. He had intended, on first arriving, to

proceed very soon into Shropshire, and visit the brother settled in

that country, but the attractions of Uppercross induced him to put this

off. There was so much of friendliness, and of flattery, and of

everything most bewitching in his reception there; the old were so

hospitable, the young so agreeable, that he could not but resolve to

remain where he was, and take all the charms and perfections of

Edward’s wife upon credit a little longer.

It was soon Uppercross with him almost every day. The Musgroves could

hardly be more ready to invite than he to come, particularly in the

morning, when he had no companion at home, for the Admiral and Mrs

Croft were generally out of doors together, interesting themselves in

their new possessions, their grass, and their sheep, and dawdling about

in a way not endurable to a third person, or driving out in a gig,

lately added to their establishment.

Hitherto there had been but one opinion of Captain Wentworth among the

Musgroves and their dependencies. It was unvarying, warm admiration

everywhere; but this intimate footing was not more than established,

when a certain Charles Hayter returned among them, to be a good deal

disturbed by it, and to think Captain Wentworth very much in the way.

Charles Hayter was the eldest of all the cousins, and a very amiable,

pleasing young man, between whom and Henrietta there had been a

considerable appearance of attachment previous to Captain Wentworth’s

introduction. He was in orders; and having a curacy in the

neighbourhood, where residence was not required, lived at his father’s

house, only two miles from Uppercross. A short absence from home had

left his fair one unguarded by his attentions at this critical period,

and when he came back he had the pain of finding very altered manners,

and of seeing Captain Wentworth.

Mrs Musgrove and Mrs Hayter were sisters. They had each had money, but

their marriages had made a material difference in their degree of

consequence. Mr Hayter had some property of his own, but it was

insignificant compared with Mr Musgrove’s; and while the Musgroves were

in the first class of society in the country, the young Hayters would,

from their parents’ inferior, retired, and unpolished way of living,

and their own defective education, have been hardly in any class at

all, but for their connexion with Uppercross, this eldest son of course

excepted, who had chosen to be a scholar and a gentleman, and who was

very superior in cultivation and manners to all the rest.

The two families had always been on excellent terms, there being no

pride on one side, and no envy on the other, and only such a

consciousness of superiority in the Miss Musgroves, as made them

pleased to improve their cousins. Charles’s attentions to Henrietta had

been observed by her father and mother without any disapprobation. “It

would not be a great match for her; but if Henrietta liked him,”—and

Henrietta \_did\_ seem to like him.

Henrietta fully thought so herself, before Captain Wentworth came; but

from that time Cousin Charles had been very much forgotten.

Which of the two sisters was preferred by Captain Wentworth was as yet

quite doubtful, as far as Anne’s observation reached. Henrietta was

perhaps the prettiest, Louisa had the higher spirits; and she knew not

\_now\_, whether the more gentle or the more lively character were most

likely to attract him.

Mr and Mrs Musgrove, either from seeing little, or from an entire

confidence in the discretion of both their daughters, and of all the

young men who came near them, seemed to leave everything to take its

chance. There was not the smallest appearance of solicitude or remark

about them in the Mansion-house; but it was different at the Cottage:

the young couple there were more disposed to speculate and wonder; and

Captain Wentworth had not been above four or five times in the Miss

Musgroves’ company, and Charles Hayter had but just reappeared, when

Anne had to listen to the opinions of her brother and sister, as to

\_which\_ was the one liked best. Charles gave it for Louisa, Mary for

Henrietta, but quite agreeing that to have him marry either could be

extremely delightful.

Charles “had never seen a pleasanter man in his life; and from what he

had once heard Captain Wentworth himself say, was very sure that he had

not made less than twenty thousand pounds by the war. Here was a

fortune at once; besides which, there would be the chance of what might

be done in any future war; and he was sure Captain Wentworth was as

likely a man to distinguish himself as any officer in the navy. Oh! it

would be a capital match for either of his sisters.”

“Upon my word it would,” replied Mary. “Dear me! If he should rise to

any very great honours! If he should ever be made a baronet! ‘Lady

Wentworth’ sounds very well. That would be a noble thing, indeed, for

Henrietta! She would take place of me then, and Henrietta would not

dislike that. Sir Frederick and Lady Wentworth! It would be but a new

creation, however, and I never think much of your new creations.”

It suited Mary best to think Henrietta the one preferred on the very

account of Charles Hayter, whose pretensions she wished to see put an

end to. She looked down very decidedly upon the Hayters, and thought it

would be quite a misfortune to have the existing connection between the

families renewed—very sad for herself and her children.

“You know,” said she, “I cannot think him at all a fit match for

Henrietta; and considering the alliances which the Musgroves have made,

she has no right to throw herself away. I do not think any young woman

has a right to make a choice that may be disagreeable and inconvenient

to the \_principal\_ part of her family, and be giving bad connections to

those who have not been used to them. And, pray, who is Charles Hayter?

Nothing but a country curate. A most improper match for Miss Musgrove

of Uppercross.”

Her husband, however, would not agree with her here; for besides having

a regard for his cousin, Charles Hayter was an eldest son, and he saw

things as an eldest son himself.

“Now you are talking nonsense, Mary,” was therefore his answer. “It

would not be a \_great\_ match for Henrietta, but Charles has a very fair

chance, through the Spicers, of getting something from the Bishop in

the course of a year or two; and you will please to remember, that he

is the eldest son; whenever my uncle dies, he steps into very pretty

property. The estate at Winthrop is not less than two hundred and fifty

acres, besides the farm near Taunton, which is some of the best land in

the country. I grant you, that any of them but Charles would be a very

shocking match for Henrietta, and indeed it could not be; he is the

only one that could be possible; but he is a very good-natured, good

sort of a fellow; and whenever Winthrop comes into his hands, he will

make a different sort of place of it, and live in a very different sort

of way; and with that property, he will never be a contemptible

man—good, freehold property. No, no; Henrietta might do worse than

marry Charles Hayter; and if she has him, and Louisa can get Captain

Wentworth, I shall be very well satisfied.”

“Charles may say what he pleases,” cried Mary to Anne, as soon as he

was out of the room, “but it would be shocking to have Henrietta marry

Charles Hayter; a very bad thing for \_her\_, and still worse for \_me;\_

and therefore it is very much to be wished that Captain Wentworth may

soon put him quite out of her head, and I have very little doubt that

he has. She took hardly any notice of Charles Hayter yesterday. I wish

you had been there to see her behaviour. And as to Captain Wentworth’s

liking Louisa as well as Henrietta, it is nonsense to say so; for he

certainly \_does\_ like Henrietta a great deal the best. But Charles is

so positive! I wish you had been with us yesterday, for then you might

have decided between us; and I am sure you would have thought as I did,

unless you had been determined to give it against me.”

A dinner at Mr Musgrove’s had been the occasion when all these things

should have been seen by Anne; but she had staid at home, under the

mixed plea of a headache of her own, and some return of indisposition

in little Charles. She had thought only of avoiding Captain Wentworth;

but an escape from being appealed to as umpire was now added to the

advantages of a quiet evening.

As to Captain Wentworth’s views, she deemed it of more consequence that

he should know his own mind early enough not to be endangering the

happiness of either sister, or impeaching his own honour, than that he

should prefer Henrietta to Louisa, or Louisa to Henrietta. Either of

them would, in all probability, make him an affectionate, good-humoured

wife. With regard to Charles Hayter, she had delicacy which must be

pained by any lightness of conduct in a well-meaning young woman, and a

heart to sympathize in any of the sufferings it occasioned; but if

Henrietta found herself mistaken in the nature of her feelings, the

alteration could not be understood too soon.

Charles Hayter had met with much to disquiet and mortify him in his

cousin’s behaviour. She had too old a regard for him to be so wholly

estranged as might in two meetings extinguish every past hope, and

leave him nothing to do but to keep away from Uppercross: but there was

such a change as became very alarming, when such a man as Captain

Wentworth was to be regarded as the probable cause. He had been absent

only two Sundays, and when they parted, had left her interested, even

to the height of his wishes, in his prospect of soon quitting his

present curacy, and obtaining that of Uppercross instead. It had then

seemed the object nearest her heart, that Dr Shirley, the rector, who

for more than forty years had been zealously discharging all the duties

of his office, but was now growing too infirm for many of them, should

be quite fixed on engaging a curate; should make his curacy quite as

good as he could afford, and should give Charles Hayter the promise of

it. The advantage of his having to come only to Uppercross, instead of

going six miles another way; of his having, in every respect, a better

curacy; of his belonging to their dear Dr Shirley, and of dear, good Dr

Shirley’s being relieved from the duty which he could no longer get

through without most injurious fatigue, had been a great deal, even to

Louisa, but had been almost everything to Henrietta. When he came back,

alas! the zeal of the business was gone by. Louisa could not listen at

all to his account of a conversation which he had just held with Dr

Shirley: she was at a window, looking out for Captain Wentworth; and

even Henrietta had at best only a divided attention to give, and seemed

to have forgotten all the former doubt and solicitude of the

negotiation.

“Well, I am very glad indeed: but I always thought you would have it; I

always thought you sure. It did not appear to me that—in short, you

know, Dr Shirley \_must\_ have a curate, and you had secured his promise.

Is he coming, Louisa?”

One morning, very soon after the dinner at the Musgroves, at which Anne

had not been present, Captain Wentworth walked into the drawing-room at

the Cottage, where were only herself and the little invalid Charles,

who was lying on the sofa.

The surprise of finding himself almost alone with Anne Elliot, deprived

his manners of their usual composure: he started, and could only say,

“I thought the Miss Musgroves had been here: Mrs Musgrove told me I

should find them here,” before he walked to the window to recollect

himself, and feel how he ought to behave.

“They are up stairs with my sister: they will be down in a few moments,

I dare say,” had been Anne’s reply, in all the confusion that was

natural; and if the child had not called her to come and do something

for him, she would have been out of the room the next moment, and

released Captain Wentworth as well as herself.

He continued at the window; and after calmly and politely saying, “I

hope the little boy is better,” was silent.

She was obliged to kneel down by the sofa, and remain there to satisfy

her patient; and thus they continued a few minutes, when, to her very

great satisfaction, she heard some other person crossing the little

vestibule. She hoped, on turning her head, to see the master of the

house; but it proved to be one much less calculated for making matters

easy—Charles Hayter, probably not at all better pleased by the sight of

Captain Wentworth than Captain Wentworth had been by the sight of Anne.

She only attempted to say, “How do you do? Will you not sit down? The

others will be here presently.”

Captain Wentworth, however, came from his window, apparently not

ill-disposed for conversation; but Charles Hayter soon put an end to

his attempts by seating himself near the table, and taking up the

newspaper; and Captain Wentworth returned to his window.

Another minute brought another addition. The younger boy, a remarkable

stout, forward child, of two years old, having got the door opened for

him by some one without, made his determined appearance among them, and

went straight to the sofa to see what was going on, and put in his

claim to anything good that might be giving away.

There being nothing to eat, he could only have some play; and as his

aunt would not let him tease his sick brother, he began to fasten

himself upon her, as she knelt, in such a way that, busy as she was

about Charles, she could not shake him off. She spoke to him, ordered,

entreated, and insisted in vain. Once she did contrive to push him

away, but the boy had the greater pleasure in getting upon her back

again directly.

“Walter,” said she, “get down this moment. You are extremely

troublesome. I am very angry with you.”

“Walter,” cried Charles Hayter, “why do you not do as you are bid? Do

not you hear your aunt speak? Come to me, Walter, come to cousin

Charles.”

But not a bit did Walter stir.

In another moment, however, she found herself in the state of being

released from him; some one was taking him from her, though he had bent

down her head so much, that his little sturdy hands were unfastened

from around her neck, and he was resolutely borne away, before she knew

that Captain Wentworth had done it.

Her sensations on the discovery made her perfectly speechless. She

could not even thank him. She could only hang over little Charles, with

most disordered feelings. His kindness in stepping forward to her

relief, the manner, the silence in which it had passed, the little

particulars of the circumstance, with the conviction soon forced on her

by the noise he was studiously making with the child, that he meant to

avoid hearing her thanks, and rather sought to testify that her

conversation was the last of his wants, produced such a confusion of

varying, but very painful agitation, as she could not recover from,

till enabled by the entrance of Mary and the Miss Musgroves to make

over her little patient to their cares, and leave the room. She could

not stay. It might have been an opportunity of watching the loves and

jealousies of the four—they were now altogether; but she could stay for

none of it. It was evident that Charles Hayter was not well inclined

towards Captain Wentworth. She had a strong impression of his having

said, in a vext tone of voice, after Captain Wentworth’s interference,

“You ought to have minded \_me\_, Walter; I told you not to teaze your

aunt;” and could comprehend his regretting that Captain Wentworth

should do what he ought to have done himself. But neither Charles

Hayter’s feelings, nor anybody’s feelings, could interest her, till she

had a little better arranged her own. She was ashamed of herself, quite

ashamed of being so nervous, so overcome by such a trifle; but so it

was, and it required a long application of solitude and reflection to

recover her.

CHAPTER X.

Other opportunities of making her observations could not fail to occur.

Anne had soon been in company with all the four together often enough

to have an opinion, though too wise to acknowledge as much at home,

where she knew it would have satisfied neither husband nor wife; for

while she considered Louisa to be rather the favourite, she could not

but think, as far as she might dare to judge from memory and

experience, that Captain Wentworth was not in love with either. They

were more in love with him; yet there it was not love. It was a little

fever of admiration; but it might, probably must, end in love with

some. Charles Hayter seemed aware of being slighted, and yet Henrietta

had sometimes the air of being divided between them. Anne longed for

the power of representing to them all what they were about, and of

pointing out some of the evils they were exposing themselves to. She

did not attribute guile to any. It was the highest satisfaction to her

to believe Captain Wentworth not in the least aware of the pain he was

occasioning. There was no triumph, no pitiful triumph in his manner. He

had, probably, never heard, and never thought of any claims of Charles

Hayter. He was only wrong in accepting the attentions (for accepting

must be the word) of two young women at once.

After a short struggle, however, Charles Hayter seemed to quit the

field. Three days had passed without his coming once to Uppercross; a

most decided change. He had even refused one regular invitation to

dinner; and having been found on the occasion by Mr Musgrove with some

large books before him, Mr and Mrs Musgrove were sure all could not be

right, and talked, with grave faces, of his studying himself to death.

It was Mary’s hope and belief that he had received a positive dismissal

from Henrietta, and her husband lived under the constant dependence of

seeing him to-morrow. Anne could only feel that Charles Hayter was

wise.

One morning, about this time Charles Musgrove and Captain Wentworth

being gone a-shooting together, as the sisters in the Cottage were

sitting quietly at work, they were visited at the window by the sisters

from the Mansion-house.

It was a very fine November day, and the Miss Musgroves came through

the little grounds, and stopped for no other purpose than to say, that

they were going to take a \_long\_ walk, and, therefore, concluded Mary

could not like to go with them; and when Mary immediately replied, with

some jealousy at not being supposed a good walker, “Oh, yes, I should

like to join you very much, I am very fond of a long walk;” Anne felt

persuaded, by the looks of the two girls, that it was precisely what

they did not wish, and admired again the sort of necessity which the

family habits seemed to produce, of everything being to be

communicated, and everything being to be done together, however

undesired and inconvenient. She tried to dissuade Mary from going, but

in vain; and that being the case, thought it best to accept the Miss

Musgroves’ much more cordial invitation to herself to go likewise, as

she might be useful in turning back with her sister, and lessening the

interference in any plan of their own.

“I cannot imagine why they should suppose I should not like a long

walk,” said Mary, as she went up stairs. “Everybody is always supposing

that I am not a good walker; and yet they would not have been pleased,

if we had refused to join them. When people come in this manner on

purpose to ask us, how can one say no?”

Just as they were setting off, the gentlemen returned. They had taken

out a young dog, who had spoilt their sport, and sent them back early.

Their time and strength, and spirits, were, therefore, exactly ready

for this walk, and they entered into it with pleasure. Could Anne have

foreseen such a junction, she would have staid at home; but, from some

feelings of interest and curiosity, she fancied now that it was too

late to retract, and the whole six set forward together in the

direction chosen by the Miss Musgroves, who evidently considered the

walk as under their guidance.

Anne’s object was, not to be in the way of anybody; and where the

narrow paths across the fields made many separations necessary, to keep

with her brother and sister. Her \_pleasure\_ in the walk must arise from

the exercise and the day, from the view of the last smiles of the year

upon the tawny leaves, and withered hedges, and from repeating to

herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of

autumn, that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind

of taste and tenderness, that season which had drawn from every poet,

worthy of being read, some attempt at description, or some lines of

feeling. She occupied her mind as much as possible in such like musings

and quotations; but it was not possible, that when within reach of

Captain Wentworth’s conversation with either of the Miss Musgroves, she

should not try to hear it; yet she caught little very remarkable. It

was mere lively chat, such as any young persons, on an intimate

footing, might fall into. He was more engaged with Louisa than with

Henrietta. Louisa certainly put more forward for his notice than her

sister. This distinction appeared to increase, and there was one speech

of Louisa’s which struck her. After one of the many praises of the day,

which were continually bursting forth, Captain Wentworth added:—

“What glorious weather for the Admiral and my sister! They meant to

take a long drive this morning; perhaps we may hail them from some of

these hills. They talked of coming into this side of the country. I

wonder whereabouts they will upset to-day. Oh! it does happen very

often, I assure you; but my sister makes nothing of it; she would as

lieve be tossed out as not.”

“Ah! You make the most of it, I know,” cried Louisa, “but if it were

really so, I should do just the same in her place. If I loved a man, as

she loves the Admiral, I would always be with him, nothing should ever

separate us, and I would rather be overturned by him, than driven

safely by anybody else.”

It was spoken with enthusiasm.

“Had you?” cried he, catching the same tone; “I honour you!” And there

was silence between them for a little while.

Anne could not immediately fall into a quotation again. The sweet

scenes of autumn were for a while put by, unless some tender sonnet,

fraught with the apt analogy of the declining year, with declining

happiness, and the images of youth and hope, and spring, all gone

together, blessed her memory. She roused herself to say, as they struck

by order into another path, “Is not this one of the ways to Winthrop?”

But nobody heard, or, at least, nobody answered her.

Winthrop, however, or its environs—for young men are, sometimes to be

met with, strolling about near home—was their destination; and after

another half mile of gradual ascent through large enclosures, where the

ploughs at work, and the fresh made path spoke the farmer counteracting

the sweets of poetical despondence, and meaning to have spring again,

they gained the summit of the most considerable hill, which parted

Uppercross and Winthrop, and soon commanded a full view of the latter,

at the foot of the hill on the other side.

Winthrop, without beauty and without dignity, was stretched before

them; an indifferent house, standing low, and hemmed in by the barns

and buildings of a farm-yard.

Mary exclaimed, “Bless me! here is Winthrop. I declare I had no idea!

Well now, I think we had better turn back; I am excessively tired.”

Henrietta, conscious and ashamed, and seeing no cousin Charles walking

along any path, or leaning against any gate, was ready to do as Mary

wished; but “No!” said Charles Musgrove, and “No, no!” cried Louisa

more eagerly, and taking her sister aside, seemed to be arguing the

matter warmly.

Charles, in the meanwhile, was very decidedly declaring his resolution

of calling on his aunt, now that he was so near; and very evidently,

though more fearfully, trying to induce his wife to go too. But this

was one of the points on which the lady shewed her strength; and when

he recommended the advantage of resting herself a quarter of an hour at

Winthrop, as she felt so tired, she resolutely answered, “Oh! no,

indeed! walking up that hill again would do her more harm than any

sitting down could do her good;” and, in short, her look and manner

declared, that go she would not.

After a little succession of these sort of debates and consultations,

it was settled between Charles and his two sisters, that he and

Henrietta should just run down for a few minutes, to see their aunt and

cousins, while the rest of the party waited for them at the top of the

hill. Louisa seemed the principal arranger of the plan; and, as she

went a little way with them, down the hill, still talking to Henrietta,

Mary took the opportunity of looking scornfully around her, and saying

to Captain Wentworth—

“It is very unpleasant, having such connexions! But, I assure you, I

have never been in the house above twice in my life.”

She received no other answer, than an artificial, assenting smile,

followed by a contemptuous glance, as he turned away, which Anne

perfectly knew the meaning of.

The brow of the hill, where they remained, was a cheerful spot: Louisa

returned; and Mary, finding a comfortable seat for herself on the step

of a stile, was very well satisfied so long as the others all stood

about her; but when Louisa drew Captain Wentworth away, to try for a

gleaning of nuts in an adjoining hedge-row, and they were gone by

degrees quite out of sight and sound, Mary was happy no longer; she

quarrelled with her own seat, was sure Louisa had got a much better

somewhere, and nothing could prevent her from going to look for a

better also. She turned through the same gate, but could not see them.

Anne found a nice seat for her, on a dry sunny bank, under the

hedge-row, in which she had no doubt of their still being, in some spot

or other. Mary sat down for a moment, but it would not do; she was sure

Louisa had found a better seat somewhere else, and she would go on till

she overtook her.

Anne, really tired herself, was glad to sit down; and she very soon

heard Captain Wentworth and Louisa in the hedge-row, behind her, as if

making their way back along the rough, wild sort of channel, down the

centre. They were speaking as they drew near. Louisa’s voice was the

first distinguished. She seemed to be in the middle of some eager

speech. What Anne first heard was—

“And so, I made her go. I could not bear that she should be frightened

from the visit by such nonsense. What! would I be turned back from

doing a thing that I had determined to do, and that I knew to be right,

by the airs and interference of such a person, or of any person I may

say? No, I have no idea of being so easily persuaded. When I have made

up my mind, I have made it; and Henrietta seemed entirely to have made

up hers to call at Winthrop to-day; and yet, she was as near giving it

up, out of nonsensical complaisance!”

“She would have turned back then, but for you?”

“She would indeed. I am almost ashamed to say it.”

“Happy for her, to have such a mind as yours at hand! After the hints

you gave just now, which did but confirm my own observations, the last

time I was in company with him, I need not affect to have no

comprehension of what is going on. I see that more than a mere dutiful

morning visit to your aunt was in question; and woe betide him, and her

too, when it comes to things of consequence, when they are placed in

circumstances requiring fortitude and strength of mind, if she have not

resolution enough to resist idle interference in such a trifle as this.

Your sister is an amiable creature; but \_yours\_ is the character of

decision and firmness, I see. If you value her conduct or happiness,

infuse as much of your own spirit into her as you can. But this, no

doubt, you have been always doing. It is the worst evil of too yielding

and indecisive a character, that no influence over it can be depended

on. You are never sure of a good impression being durable; everybody

may sway it. Let those who would be happy be firm. Here is a nut,” said

he, catching one down from an upper bough, “to exemplify: a beautiful

glossy nut, which, blessed with original strength, has outlived all the

storms of autumn. Not a puncture, not a weak spot anywhere. This nut,”

he continued, with playful solemnity, “while so many of his brethren

have fallen and been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all

the happiness that a hazel nut can be supposed capable of.” Then

returning to his former earnest tone—“My first wish for all whom I am

interested in, is that they should be firm. If Louisa Musgrove would be

beautiful and happy in her November of life, she will cherish all her

present powers of mind.”

He had done, and was unanswered. It would have surprised Anne if Louisa

could have readily answered such a speech: words of such interest,

spoken with such serious warmth! She could imagine what Louisa was

feeling. For herself, she feared to move, lest she should be seen.

While she remained, a bush of low rambling holly protected her, and

they were moving on. Before they were beyond her hearing, however,

Louisa spoke again.

“Mary is good-natured enough in many respects,” said she; “but she does

sometimes provoke me excessively, by her nonsense and pride—the Elliot

pride. She has a great deal too much of the Elliot pride. We do so wish

that Charles had married Anne instead. I suppose you know he wanted to

marry Anne?”

After a moment’s pause, Captain Wentworth said—

“Do you mean that she refused him?”

“Oh! yes; certainly.”

“When did that happen?”

“I do not exactly know, for Henrietta and I were at school at the time;

but I believe about a year before he married Mary. I wish she had

accepted him. We should all have liked her a great deal better; and

papa and mamma always think it was her great friend Lady Russell’s

doing, that she did not. They think Charles might not be learned and

bookish enough to please Lady Russell, and that therefore, she

persuaded Anne to refuse him.”

The sounds were retreating, and Anne distinguished no more. Her own

emotions still kept her fixed. She had much to recover from, before she

could move. The listener’s proverbial fate was not absolutely hers; she

had heard no evil of herself, but she had heard a great deal of very

painful import. She saw how her own character was considered by Captain

Wentworth, and there had been just that degree of feeling and curiosity

about her in his manner which must give her extreme agitation.

As soon as she could, she went after Mary, and having found, and walked

back with her to their former station, by the stile, felt some comfort

in their whole party being immediately afterwards collected, and once

more in motion together. Her spirits wanted the solitude and silence

which only numbers could give.

Charles and Henrietta returned, bringing, as may be conjectured,

Charles Hayter with them. The minutiae of the business Anne could not

attempt to understand; even Captain Wentworth did not seem admitted to

perfect confidence here; but that there had been a withdrawing on the

gentleman’s side, and a relenting on the lady’s, and that they were now

very glad to be together again, did not admit a doubt. Henrietta looked

a little ashamed, but very well pleased;—Charles Hayter exceedingly

happy: and they were devoted to each other almost from the first

instant of their all setting forward for Uppercross.

Everything now marked out Louisa for Captain Wentworth; nothing could

be plainer; and where many divisions were necessary, or even where they

were not, they walked side by side nearly as much as the other two. In

a long strip of meadow land, where there was ample space for all, they

were thus divided, forming three distinct parties; and to that party of

the three which boasted least animation, and least complaisance, Anne

necessarily belonged. She joined Charles and Mary, and was tired enough

to be very glad of Charles’s other arm; but Charles, though in very

good humour with her, was out of temper with his wife. Mary had shewn

herself disobliging to him, and was now to reap the consequence, which

consequence was his dropping her arm almost every moment to cut off the

heads of some nettles in the hedge with his switch; and when Mary began

to complain of it, and lament her being ill-used, according to custom,

in being on the hedge side, while Anne was never incommoded on the

other, he dropped the arms of both to hunt after a weasel which he had

a momentary glance of, and they could hardly get him along at all.

This long meadow bordered a lane, which their footpath, at the end of

it was to cross, and when the party had all reached the gate of exit,

the carriage advancing in the same direction, which had been some time

heard, was just coming up, and proved to be Admiral Croft’s gig. He and

his wife had taken their intended drive, and were returning home. Upon

hearing how long a walk the young people had engaged in, they kindly

offered a seat to any lady who might be particularly tired; it would

save her a full mile, and they were going through Uppercross. The

invitation was general, and generally declined. The Miss Musgroves were

not at all tired, and Mary was either offended, by not being asked

before any of the others, or what Louisa called the Elliot pride could

not endure to make a third in a one horse chaise.

The walking party had crossed the lane, and were surmounting an

opposite stile, and the Admiral was putting his horse in motion again,

when Captain Wentworth cleared the hedge in a moment to say something

to his sister. The something might be guessed by its effects.

“Miss Elliot, I am sure \_you\_ are tired,” cried Mrs Croft. “Do let us

have the pleasure of taking you home. Here is excellent room for three,

I assure you. If we were all like you, I believe we might sit four. You

must, indeed, you must.”

Anne was still in the lane; and though instinctively beginning to

decline, she was not allowed to proceed. The Admiral’s kind urgency

came in support of his wife’s; they would not be refused; they

compressed themselves into the smallest possible space to leave her a

corner, and Captain Wentworth, without saying a word, turned to her,

and quietly obliged her to be assisted into the carriage.

Yes; he had done it. She was in the carriage, and felt that he had

placed her there, that his will and his hands had done it, that she

owed it to his perception of her fatigue, and his resolution to give

her rest. She was very much affected by the view of his disposition

towards her, which all these things made apparent. This little

circumstance seemed the completion of all that had gone before. She

understood him. He could not forgive her, but he could not be

unfeeling. Though condemning her for the past, and considering it with

high and unjust resentment, though perfectly careless of her, and

though becoming attached to another, still he could not see her suffer,

without the desire of giving her relief. It was a remainder of former

sentiment; it was an impulse of pure, though unacknowledged friendship;

it was a proof of his own warm and amiable heart, which she could not

contemplate without emotions so compounded of pleasure and pain, that

she knew not which prevailed.

Her answers to the kindness and the remarks of her companions were at

first unconsciously given. They had travelled half their way along the

rough lane, before she was quite awake to what they said. She then

found them talking of “Frederick.”

“He certainly means to have one or other of those two girls, Sophy,”

said the Admiral; “but there is no saying which. He has been running

after them, too, long enough, one would think, to make up his mind. Ay,

this comes of the peace. If it were war now, he would have settled it

long ago. We sailors, Miss Elliot, cannot afford to make long

courtships in time of war. How many days was it, my dear, between the

first time of my seeing you and our sitting down together in our

lodgings at North Yarmouth?”

“We had better not talk about it, my dear,” replied Mrs Croft,

pleasantly; “for if Miss Elliot were to hear how soon we came to an

understanding, she would never be persuaded that we could be happy

together. I had known you by character, however, long before.”

“Well, and I had heard of you as a very pretty girl, and what were we

to wait for besides? I do not like having such things so long in hand.

I wish Frederick would spread a little more canvass, and bring us home

one of these young ladies to Kellynch. Then there would always be

company for them. And very nice young ladies they both are; I hardly

know one from the other.”

“Very good humoured, unaffected girls, indeed,” said Mrs Croft, in a

tone of calmer praise, such as made Anne suspect that her keener powers

might not consider either of them as quite worthy of her brother; “and

a very respectable family. One could not be connected with better

people. My dear Admiral, that post! we shall certainly take that post.”

But by coolly giving the reins a better direction herself they happily

passed the danger; and by once afterwards judiciously putting out her

hand they neither fell into a rut, nor ran foul of a dung-cart; and

Anne, with some amusement at their style of driving, which she imagined

no bad representation of the general guidance of their affairs, found

herself safely deposited by them at the Cottage.

CHAPTER XI.

The time now approached for Lady Russell’s return: the day was even

fixed; and Anne, being engaged to join her as soon as she was

resettled, was looking forward to an early removal to Kellynch, and

beginning to think how her own comfort was likely to be affected by it.

It would place her in the same village with Captain Wentworth, within

half a mile of him; they would have to frequent the same church, and

there must be intercourse between the two families. This was against

her; but on the other hand, he spent so much of his time at Uppercross,

that in removing thence she might be considered rather as leaving him

behind, than as going towards him; and, upon the whole, she believed

she must, on this interesting question, be the gainer, almost as

certainly as in her change of domestic society, in leaving poor Mary

for Lady Russell.

She wished it might be possible for her to avoid ever seeing Captain

Wentworth at the Hall: those rooms had witnessed former meetings which

would be brought too painfully before her; but she was yet more anxious

for the possibility of Lady Russell and Captain Wentworth never meeting

anywhere. They did not like each other, and no renewal of acquaintance

now could do any good; and were Lady Russell to see them together, she

might think that he had too much self-possession, and she too little.

These points formed her chief solicitude in anticipating her removal

from Uppercross, where she felt she had been stationed quite long

enough. Her usefulness to little Charles would always give some

sweetness to the memory of her two months’ visit there, but he was

gaining strength apace, and she had nothing else to stay for.

The conclusion of her visit, however, was diversified in a way which

she had not at all imagined. Captain Wentworth, after being unseen and

unheard of at Uppercross for two whole days, appeared again among them

to justify himself by a relation of what had kept him away.

A letter from his friend, Captain Harville, having found him out at

last, had brought intelligence of Captain Harville’s being settled with

his family at Lyme for the winter; of their being therefore, quite

unknowingly, within twenty miles of each other. Captain Harville had

never been in good health since a severe wound which he received two

years before, and Captain Wentworth’s anxiety to see him had determined

him to go immediately to Lyme. He had been there for four-and-twenty

hours. His acquittal was complete, his friendship warmly honoured, a

lively interest excited for his friend, and his description of the fine

country about Lyme so feelingly attended to by the party, that an

earnest desire to see Lyme themselves, and a project for going thither

was the consequence.

The young people were all wild to see Lyme. Captain Wentworth talked of

going there again himself, it was only seventeen miles from Uppercross;

though November, the weather was by no means bad; and, in short,

Louisa, who was the most eager of the eager, having formed the

resolution to go, and besides the pleasure of doing as she liked, being

now armed with the idea of merit in maintaining her own way, bore down

all the wishes of her father and mother for putting it off till summer;

and to Lyme they were to go—Charles, Mary, Anne, Henrietta, Louisa, and

Captain Wentworth.

The first heedless scheme had been to go in the morning and return at

night; but to this Mr Musgrove, for the sake of his horses, would not

consent; and when it came to be rationally considered, a day in the

middle of November would not leave much time for seeing a new place,

after deducting seven hours, as the nature of the country required, for

going and returning. They were, consequently, to stay the night there,

and not to be expected back till the next day’s dinner. This was felt

to be a considerable amendment; and though they all met at the Great

House at rather an early breakfast hour, and set off very punctually,

it was so much past noon before the two carriages, Mr Musgrove’s coach

containing the four ladies, and Charles’s curricle, in which he drove

Captain Wentworth, were descending the long hill into Lyme, and

entering upon the still steeper street of the town itself, that it was

very evident they would not have more than time for looking about them,

before the light and warmth of the day were gone.

After securing accommodations, and ordering a dinner at one of the

inns, the next thing to be done was unquestionably to walk directly

down to the sea. They were come too late in the year for any amusement

or variety which Lyme, as a public place, might offer. The rooms were

shut up, the lodgers almost all gone, scarcely any family but of the

residents left; and, as there is nothing to admire in the buildings

themselves, the remarkable situation of the town, the principal street

almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobb, skirting round

the pleasant little bay, which, in the season, is animated with bathing

machines and company; the Cobb itself, its old wonders and new

improvements, with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to

the east of the town, are what the stranger’s eye will seek; and a very

strange stranger it must be, who does not see charms in the immediate

environs of Lyme, to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its

neighbourhood, Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of

country, and still more, its sweet, retired bay, backed by dark cliffs,

where fragments of low rock among the sands, make it the happiest spot

for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied

contemplation; the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up Lyme;

and, above all, Pinny, with its green chasms between romantic rocks,

where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth,

declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first

partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state,

where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited, as may more than

equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight:

these places must be visited, and visited again, to make the worth of

Lyme understood.

The party from Uppercross passing down by the now deserted and

melancholy looking rooms, and still descending, soon found themselves

on the sea-shore; and lingering only, as all must linger and gaze on a

first return to the sea, who ever deserved to look on it at all,

proceeded towards the Cobb, equally their object in itself and on

Captain Wentworth’s account: for in a small house, near the foot of an

old pier of unknown date, were the Harvilles settled. Captain Wentworth

turned in to call on his friend; the others walked on, and he was to

join them on the Cobb.

They were by no means tired of wondering and admiring; and not even

Louisa seemed to feel that they had parted with Captain Wentworth long,

when they saw him coming after them, with three companions, all well

known already, by description, to be Captain and Mrs Harville, and a

Captain Benwick, who was staying with them.

Captain Benwick had some time ago been first lieutenant of the Laconia;

and the account which Captain Wentworth had given of him, on his return

from Lyme before, his warm praise of him as an excellent young man and

an officer, whom he had always valued highly, which must have stamped

him well in the esteem of every listener, had been followed by a little

history of his private life, which rendered him perfectly interesting

in the eyes of all the ladies. He had been engaged to Captain

Harville’s sister, and was now mourning her loss. They had been a year

or two waiting for fortune and promotion. Fortune came, his prize-money

as lieutenant being great; promotion, too, came at \_last;\_ but Fanny

Harville did not live to know it. She had died the preceding summer

while he was at sea. Captain Wentworth believed it impossible for man

to be more attached to woman than poor Benwick had been to Fanny

Harville, or to be more deeply afflicted under the dreadful change. He

considered his disposition as of the sort which must suffer heavily,

uniting very strong feelings with quiet, serious, and retiring manners,

and a decided taste for reading, and sedentary pursuits. To finish the

interest of the story, the friendship between him and the Harvilles

seemed, if possible, augmented by the event which closed all their

views of alliance, and Captain Benwick was now living with them

entirely. Captain Harville had taken his present house for half a year;

his taste, and his health, and his fortune, all directing him to a

residence inexpensive, and by the sea; and the grandeur of the country,

and the retirement of Lyme in the winter, appeared exactly adapted to

Captain Benwick’s state of mind. The sympathy and good-will excited

towards Captain Benwick was very great.

“And yet,” said Anne to herself, as they now moved forward to meet the

party, “he has not, perhaps, a more sorrowing heart than I have. I

cannot believe his prospects so blighted for ever. He is younger than I

am; younger in feeling, if not in fact; younger as a man. He will rally

again, and be happy with another.”

They all met, and were introduced. Captain Harville was a tall, dark

man, with a sensible, benevolent countenance; a little lame; and from

strong features and want of health, looking much older than Captain

Wentworth. Captain Benwick looked, and was, the youngest of the three,

and, compared with either of them, a little man. He had a pleasing face

and a melancholy air, just as he ought to have, and drew back from

conversation.

Captain Harville, though not equalling Captain Wentworth in manners,

was a perfect gentleman, unaffected, warm, and obliging. Mrs Harville,

a degree less polished than her husband, seemed, however, to have the

same good feelings; and nothing could be more pleasant than their

desire of considering the whole party as friends of their own, because

the friends of Captain Wentworth, or more kindly hospitable than their

entreaties for their all promising to dine with them. The dinner,

already ordered at the inn, was at last, though unwillingly, accepted

as a excuse; but they seemed almost hurt that Captain Wentworth should

have brought any such party to Lyme, without considering it as a thing

of course that they should dine with them.

There was so much attachment to Captain Wentworth in all this, and such

a bewitching charm in a degree of hospitality so uncommon, so unlike

the usual style of give-and-take invitations, and dinners of formality

and display, that Anne felt her spirits not likely to be benefited by

an increasing acquaintance among his brother-officers. “These would

have been all my friends,” was her thought; and she had to struggle

against a great tendency to lowness.

On quitting the Cobb, they all went in-doors with their new friends,

and found rooms so small as none but those who invite from the heart

could think capable of accommodating so many. Anne had a moment’s

astonishment on the subject herself; but it was soon lost in the

pleasanter feelings which sprang from the sight of all the ingenious

contrivances and nice arrangements of Captain Harville, to turn the

actual space to the best account, to supply the deficiencies of

lodging-house furniture, and defend the windows and doors against the

winter storms to be expected. The varieties in the fitting-up of the

rooms, where the common necessaries provided by the owner, in the

common indifferent plight, were contrasted with some few articles of a

rare species of wood, excellently worked up, and with something curious

and valuable from all the distant countries Captain Harville had

visited, were more than amusing to Anne; connected as it all was with

his profession, the fruit of its labours, the effect of its influence

on his habits, the picture of repose and domestic happiness it

presented, made it to her a something more, or less, than

gratification.

Captain Harville was no reader; but he had contrived excellent

accommodations, and fashioned very pretty shelves, for a tolerable

collection of well-bound volumes, the property of Captain Benwick. His

lameness prevented him from taking much exercise; but a mind of

usefulness and ingenuity seemed to furnish him with constant employment

within. He drew, he varnished, he carpentered, he glued; he made toys

for the children; he fashioned new netting-needles and pins with

improvements; and if everything else was done, sat down to his large

fishing-net at one corner of the room.

Anne thought she left great happiness behind her when they quitted the

house; and Louisa, by whom she found herself walking, burst forth into

raptures of admiration and delight on the character of the navy; their

friendliness, their brotherliness, their openness, their uprightness;

protesting that she was convinced of sailors having more worth and

warmth than any other set of men in England; that they only knew how to

live, and they only deserved to be respected and loved.

They went back to dress and dine; and so well had the scheme answered

already, that nothing was found amiss; though its being “so entirely

out of season,” and the “no thoroughfare of Lyme,” and the “no

expectation of company,” had brought many apologies from the heads of

the inn.

Anne found herself by this time growing so much more hardened to being

in Captain Wentworth’s company than she had at first imagined could

ever be, that the sitting down to the same table with him now, and the

interchange of the common civilities attending on it (they never got

beyond), was become a mere nothing.

The nights were too dark for the ladies to meet again till the morrow,

but Captain Harville had promised them a visit in the evening; and he

came, bringing his friend also, which was more than had been expected,

it having been agreed that Captain Benwick had all the appearance of

being oppressed by the presence of so many strangers. He ventured among

them again, however, though his spirits certainly did not seem fit for

the mirth of the party in general.

While Captains Wentworth and Harville led the talk on one side of the

room, and by recurring to former days, supplied anecdotes in abundance

to occupy and entertain the others, it fell to Anne’s lot to be placed

rather apart with Captain Benwick; and a very good impulse of her

nature obliged her to begin an acquaintance with him. He was shy, and

disposed to abstraction; but the engaging mildness of her countenance,

and gentleness of her manners, soon had their effect; and Anne was well

repaid the first trouble of exertion. He was evidently a young man of

considerable taste in reading, though principally in poetry; and

besides the persuasion of having given him at least an evening’s

indulgence in the discussion of subjects, which his usual companions

had probably no concern in, she had the hope of being of real use to

him in some suggestions as to the duty and benefit of struggling

against affliction, which had naturally grown out of their

conversation. For, though shy, he did not seem reserved; it had rather

the appearance of feelings glad to burst their usual restraints; and

having talked of poetry, the richness of the present age, and gone

through a brief comparison of opinion as to the first-rate poets,

trying to ascertain whether \_Marmion\_ or \_The Lady of the Lake\_ were to

be preferred, and how ranked the \_Giaour\_ and \_The Bride of Abydos;\_

and moreover, how the \_Giaour\_ was to be pronounced, he showed himself

so intimately acquainted with all the tenderest songs of the one poet,

and all the impassioned descriptions of hopeless agony of the other; he

repeated, with such tremulous feeling, the various lines which imaged a

broken heart, or a mind destroyed by wretchedness, and looked so

entirely as if he meant to be understood, that she ventured to hope he

did not always read only poetry, and to say, that she thought it was

the misfortune of poetry to be seldom safely enjoyed by those who

enjoyed it completely; and that the strong feelings which alone could

estimate it truly were the very feelings which ought to taste it but

sparingly.

His looks shewing him not pained, but pleased with this allusion to his

situation, she was emboldened to go on; and feeling in herself the

right of seniority of mind, she ventured to recommend a larger

allowance of prose in his daily study; and on being requested to

particularize, mentioned such works of our best moralists, such

collections of the finest letters, such memoirs of characters of worth

and suffering, as occurred to her at the moment as calculated to rouse

and fortify the mind by the highest precepts, and the strongest

examples of moral and religious endurances.

Captain Benwick listened attentively, and seemed grateful for the

interest implied; and though with a shake of the head, and sighs which

declared his little faith in the efficacy of any books on grief like

his, noted down the names of those she recommended, and promised to

procure and read them.

When the evening was over, Anne could not but be amused at the idea of

her coming to Lyme to preach patience and resignation to a young man

whom she had never seen before; nor could she help fearing, on more

serious reflection, that, like many other great moralists and

preachers, she had been eloquent on a point in which her own conduct

would ill bear examination.

CHAPTER XII.

Anne and Henrietta, finding themselves the earliest of the party the

next morning, agreed to stroll down to the sea before breakfast. They

went to the sands, to watch the flowing of the tide, which a fine

south-easterly breeze was bringing in with all the grandeur which so

flat a shore admitted. They praised the morning; gloried in the sea;

sympathized in the delight of the fresh-feeling breeze—and were silent;

till Henrietta suddenly began again with—

“Oh! yes,—I am quite convinced that, with very few exceptions, the

sea-air always does good. There can be no doubt of its having been of

the greatest service to Dr Shirley, after his illness, last spring

twelvemonth. He declares himself, that coming to Lyme for a month, did

him more good than all the medicine he took; and that being by the

sea always makes him feel young again. Now, I cannot help thinking it

a pity that he does not live entirely by the sea. I do think he had

better leave Uppercross entirely, and fix at Lyme. Do not you, Anne? Do

not you agree with me, that it is the best thing he could do, both for

himself and Mrs Shirley? She has cousins here, you know, and many

acquaintance, which would make it cheerful for her, and I am sure she

would be glad to get to a place where she could have medical attendance

at hand, in case of his having another seizure. Indeed I think it quite

melancholy to have such excellent people as Dr and Mrs Shirley, who

have been doing good all their lives, wearing out their last days in a

place like Uppercross, where, excepting our family, they seem shut out

from all the world. I wish his friends would propose it to him. I

really think they ought. And, as to procuring a dispensation, there

could be no difficulty at his time of life, and with his character. My

only doubt is, whether anything could persuade him to leave his parish.

He is so very strict and scrupulous in his notions; over-scrupulous I

must say. Do not you think, Anne, it is being over-scrupulous? Do not

you think it is quite a mistaken point of conscience, when a clergyman

sacrifices his health for the sake of duties, which may be just as well

performed by another person? And at Lyme too, only seventeen miles off,

he would be near enough to hear, if people thought there was anything

to complain of.”

Anne smiled more than once to herself during this speech, and entered

into the subject, as ready to do good by entering into the feelings of

a young lady as of a young man, though here it was good of a lower

standard, for what could be offered but general acquiescence? She said

all that was reasonable and proper on the business; felt the claims of

Dr Shirley to repose as she ought; saw how very desirable it was that

he should have some active, respectable young man as a resident

curate, and was even courteous enough to hint at the advantage of such

resident curate’s being married.

“I wish,” said Henrietta, very well pleased with her companion, “I wish

Lady Russell lived at Uppercross, and were intimate with Dr Shirley. I

have always heard of Lady Russell as a woman of the greatest influence

with everybody! I always look upon her as able to persuade a person to

anything! I am afraid of her, as I have told you before, quite afraid

of her, because she is so very clever; but I respect her amazingly, and

wish we had such a neighbour at Uppercross.”

Anne was amused by Henrietta’s manner of being grateful, and amused

also that the course of events and the new interests of Henrietta’s

views should have placed her friend at all in favour with any of the

Musgrove family; she had only time, however, for a general answer, and

a wish that such another woman were at Uppercross, before all subjects

suddenly ceased, on seeing Louisa and Captain Wentworth coming towards

them. They came also for a stroll till breakfast was likely to be

ready; but Louisa recollecting immediately afterwards that she had

something to procure at a shop, invited them all to go back with her

into the town. They were all at her disposal.

When they came to the steps, leading upwards from the beach, a

gentleman, at the same moment preparing to come down, politely drew

back, and stopped to give them way. They ascended and passed him; and

as they passed, Anne’s face caught his eye, and he looked at her with a

degree of earnest admiration, which she could not be insensible of. She

was looking remarkably well; her very regular, very pretty features,

having the bloom and freshness of youth restored by the fine wind which

had been blowing on her complexion, and by the animation of eye which

it had also produced. It was evident that the gentleman, (completely a

gentleman in manner) admired her exceedingly. Captain Wentworth looked

round at her instantly in a way which shewed his noticing of it. He

gave her a momentary glance, a glance of brightness, which seemed to

say, “That man is struck with you, and even I, at this moment, see

something like Anne Elliot again.”

After attending Louisa through her business, and loitering about a

little longer, they returned to the inn; and Anne, in passing

afterwards quickly from her own chamber to their dining-room, had

nearly run against the very same gentleman, as he came out of an

adjoining apartment. She had before conjectured him to be a stranger

like themselves, and determined that a well-looking groom, who was

strolling about near the two inns as they came back, should be his

servant. Both master and man being in mourning assisted the idea. It

was now proved that he belonged to the same inn as themselves; and this

second meeting, short as it was, also proved again by the gentleman’s

looks, that he thought hers very lovely, and by the readiness and

propriety of his apologies, that he was a man of exceedingly good

manners. He seemed about thirty, and though not handsome, had an

agreeable person. Anne felt that she should like to know who he was.

They had nearly done breakfast, when the sound of a carriage, (almost

the first they had heard since entering Lyme) drew half the party to

the window. It was a gentleman’s carriage, a curricle, but only coming

round from the stable-yard to the front door; somebody must be going

away. It was driven by a servant in mourning.

The word curricle made Charles Musgrove jump up that he might compare

it with his own; the servant in mourning roused Anne’s curiosity, and

the whole six were collected to look, by the time the owner of the

curricle was to be seen issuing from the door amidst the bows and

civilities of the household, and taking his seat, to drive off.

“Ah!” cried Captain Wentworth, instantly, and with half a glance at

Anne, “it is the very man we passed.”

The Miss Musgroves agreed to it; and having all kindly watched him as

far up the hill as they could, they returned to the breakfast table.

The waiter came into the room soon afterwards.

“Pray,” said Captain Wentworth, immediately, “can you tell us the name

of the gentleman who is just gone away?”

“Yes, Sir, a Mr Elliot, a gentleman of large fortune, came in last

night from Sidmouth. Dare say you heard the carriage, sir, while you

were at dinner; and going on now for Crewkherne, in his way to Bath and

London.”

“Elliot!” Many had looked on each other, and many had repeated the

name, before all this had been got through, even by the smart rapidity

of a waiter.

“Bless me!” cried Mary; “it must be our cousin; it must be our Mr

Elliot, it must, indeed! Charles, Anne, must not it? In mourning, you

see, just as our Mr Elliot must be. How very extraordinary! In the very

same inn with us! Anne, must not it be our Mr Elliot? my father’s next

heir? Pray sir,” turning to the waiter, “did not you hear, did not his

servant say whether he belonged to the Kellynch family?”

“No, ma’am, he did not mention no particular family; but he said his

master was a very rich gentleman, and would be a baronight some day.”

“There! you see!” cried Mary in an ecstasy, “just as I said! Heir to

Sir Walter Elliot! I was sure that would come out, if it was so. Depend

upon it, that is a circumstance which his servants take care to

publish, wherever he goes. But, Anne, only conceive how extraordinary!

I wish I had looked at him more. I wish we had been aware in time, who

it was, that he might have been introduced to us. What a pity that we

should not have been introduced to each other! Do you think he had the

Elliot countenance? I hardly looked at him, I was looking at the

horses; but I think he had something of the Elliot countenance, I

wonder the arms did not strike me! Oh! the great-coat was hanging over

the panel, and hid the arms, so it did; otherwise, I am sure, I should

have observed them, and the livery too; if the servant had not been in

mourning, one should have known him by the livery.”

“Putting all these very extraordinary circumstances together,” said

Captain Wentworth, “we must consider it to be the arrangement of

Providence, that you should not be introduced to your cousin.”

When she could command Mary’s attention, Anne quietly tried to convince

her that their father and Mr Elliot had not, for many years, been on

such terms as to make the power of attempting an introduction at all

desirable.

At the same time, however, it was a secret gratification to herself to

have seen her cousin, and to know that the future owner of Kellynch was

undoubtedly a gentleman, and had an air of good sense. She would not,

upon any account, mention her having met with him the second time;

luckily Mary did not much attend to their having passed close by him in

their earlier walk, but she would have felt quite ill-used by Anne’s

having actually run against him in the passage, and received his very

polite excuses, while she had never been near him at all; no, that

cousinly little interview must remain a perfect secret.

“Of course,” said Mary, “you will mention our seeing Mr Elliot, the

next time you write to Bath. I think my father certainly ought to hear

of it; do mention all about him.”

Anne avoided a direct reply, but it was just the circumstance which she

considered as not merely unnecessary to be communicated, but as what

ought to be suppressed. The offence which had been given her father,

many years back, she knew; Elizabeth’s particular share in it she

suspected; and that Mr Elliot’s idea always produced irritation in both

was beyond a doubt. Mary never wrote to Bath herself; all the toil of

keeping up a slow and unsatisfactory correspondence with Elizabeth fell

on Anne.

Breakfast had not been long over, when they were joined by Captain and

Mrs Harville and Captain Benwick; with whom they had appointed to take

their last walk about Lyme. They ought to be setting off for Uppercross

by one, and in the meanwhile were to be all together, and out of doors

as long as they could.

Anne found Captain Benwick getting near her, as soon as they were all

fairly in the street. Their conversation the preceding evening did not

disincline him to seek her again; and they walked together some time,

talking as before of Mr Scott and Lord Byron, and still as unable as

before, and as unable as any other two readers, to think exactly alike

of the merits of either, till something occasioned an almost general

change amongst their party, and instead of Captain Benwick, she had

Captain Harville by her side.

“Miss Elliot,” said he, speaking rather low, “you have done a good deed

in making that poor fellow talk so much. I wish he could have such

company oftener. It is bad for him, I know, to be shut up as he is; but

what can we do? We cannot part.”

“No,” said Anne, “that I can easily believe to be impossible; but in

time, perhaps—we know what time does in every case of affliction, and

you must remember, Captain Harville, that your friend may yet be called

a young mourner—only last summer, I understand.”

“Ay, true enough,” (with a deep sigh) “only June.”

“And not known to him, perhaps, so soon.”

“Not till the first week of August, when he came home from the Cape,

just made into the Grappler. I was at Plymouth dreading to hear of him;

he sent in letters, but the Grappler was under orders for Portsmouth.

There the news must follow him, but who was to tell it? not I. I would

as soon have been run up to the yard-arm. Nobody could do it, but that

good fellow” (pointing to Captain Wentworth). “The Laconia had come

into Plymouth the week before; no danger of her being sent to sea

again. He stood his chance for the rest; wrote up for leave of absence,

but without waiting the return, travelled night and day till he got to

Portsmouth, rowed off to the Grappler that instant, and never left the

poor fellow for a week. That’s what he did, and nobody else could have

saved poor James. You may think, Miss Elliot, whether he is dear to

us!”

Anne did think on the question with perfect decision, and said as much

in reply as her own feeling could accomplish, or as his seemed able to

bear, for he was too much affected to renew the subject, and when he

spoke again, it was of something totally different.

Mrs Harville’s giving it as her opinion that her husband would have

quite walking enough by the time he reached home, determined the

direction of all the party in what was to be their last walk; they

would accompany them to their door, and then return and set off

themselves. By all their calculations there was just time for this; but

as they drew near the Cobb, there was such a general wish to walk along

it once more, all were so inclined, and Louisa soon grew so determined,

that the difference of a quarter of an hour, it was found, would be no

difference at all; so with all the kind leave-taking, and all the kind

interchange of invitations and promises which may be imagined, they

parted from Captain and Mrs Harville at their own door, and still

accompanied by Captain Benwick, who seemed to cling to them to the

last, proceeded to make the proper adieus to the Cobb.

Anne found Captain Benwick again drawing near her. Lord Byron’s “dark

blue seas” could not fail of being brought forward by their present

view, and she gladly gave him all her attention as long as attention

was possible. It was soon drawn, perforce another way.

There was too much wind to make the high part of the new Cobb pleasant

for the ladies, and they agreed to get down the steps to the lower, and

all were contented to pass quietly and carefully down the steep flight,

excepting Louisa; she must be jumped down them by Captain Wentworth. In

all their walks, he had had to jump her from the stiles; the sensation

was delightful to her. The hardness of the pavement for her feet, made

him less willing upon the present occasion; he did it, however. She was

safely down, and instantly, to show her enjoyment, ran up the steps to

be jumped down again. He advised her against it, thought the jar too

great; but no, he reasoned and talked in vain, she smiled and said, “I

am determined I will:” he put out his hands; she was too precipitate by

half a second, she fell on the pavement on the Lower Cobb, and was

taken up lifeless! There was no wound, no blood, no visible bruise; but

her eyes were closed, she breathed not, her face was like death. The

horror of the moment to all who stood around!

Captain Wentworth, who had caught her up, knelt with her in his arms,

looking on her with a face as pallid as her own, in an agony of

silence. “She is dead! she is dead!” screamed Mary, catching hold of

her husband, and contributing with his own horror to make him

immoveable; and in another moment, Henrietta, sinking under the

conviction, lost her senses too, and would have fallen on the steps,

but for Captain Benwick and Anne, who caught and supported her between

them.

“Is there no one to help me?” were the first words which burst from

Captain Wentworth, in a tone of despair, and as if all his own strength

were gone.

“Go to him, go to him,” cried Anne, “for heaven’s sake go to him. I can

support her myself. Leave me, and go to him. Rub her hands, rub her

temples; here are salts; take them, take them.”

Captain Benwick obeyed, and Charles at the same moment, disengaging

himself from his wife, they were both with him; and Louisa was raised

up and supported more firmly between them, and everything was done that

Anne had prompted, but in vain; while Captain Wentworth, staggering

against the wall for his support, exclaimed in the bitterest agony—

“Oh God! her father and mother!”

“A surgeon!” said Anne.

He caught the word; it seemed to rouse him at once, and saying

only—“True, true, a surgeon this instant,” was darting away, when Anne

eagerly suggested—

“Captain Benwick, would not it be better for Captain Benwick? He knows

where a surgeon is to be found.”

Every one capable of thinking felt the advantage of the idea, and in a

moment (it was all done in rapid moments) Captain Benwick had resigned

the poor corpse-like figure entirely to the brother’s care, and was off

for the town with the utmost rapidity.

As to the wretched party left behind, it could scarcely be said which

of the three, who were completely rational, was suffering most: Captain

Wentworth, Anne, or Charles, who, really a very affectionate brother,

hung over Louisa with sobs of grief, and could only turn his eyes from

one sister, to see the other in a state as insensible, or to witness

the hysterical agitations of his wife, calling on him for help which he

could not give.

Anne, attending with all the strength and zeal, and thought, which

instinct supplied, to Henrietta, still tried, at intervals, to suggest

comfort to the others, tried to quiet Mary, to animate Charles, to

assuage the feelings of Captain Wentworth. Both seemed to look to her

for directions.

“Anne, Anne,” cried Charles, “What is to be done next? What, in

heaven’s name, is to be done next?”

Captain Wentworth’s eyes were also turned towards her.

“Had not she better be carried to the inn? Yes, I am sure: carry her

gently to the inn.”

“Yes, yes, to the inn,” repeated Captain Wentworth, comparatively

collected, and eager to be doing something. “I will carry her myself.

Musgrove, take care of the others.”

By this time the report of the accident had spread among the workmen

and boatmen about the Cobb, and many were collected near them, to be

useful if wanted, at any rate, to enjoy the sight of a dead young lady,

nay, two dead young ladies, for it proved twice as fine as the first

report. To some of the best-looking of these good people Henrietta was

consigned, for, though partially revived, she was quite helpless; and

in this manner, Anne walking by her side, and Charles attending to his

wife, they set forward, treading back with feelings unutterable, the

ground, which so lately, so very lately, and so light of heart, they

had passed along.

They were not off the Cobb, before the Harvilles met them. Captain

Benwick had been seen flying by their house, with a countenance which

showed something to be wrong; and they had set off immediately,

informed and directed as they passed, towards the spot. Shocked as

Captain Harville was, he brought senses and nerves that could be

instantly useful; and a look between him and his wife decided what was

to be done. She must be taken to their house; all must go to their

house; and await the surgeon’s arrival there. They would not listen to

scruples: he was obeyed; they were all beneath his roof; and while

Louisa, under Mrs Harville’s direction, was conveyed up stairs, and

given possession of her own bed, assistance, cordials, restoratives

were supplied by her husband to all who needed them.

Louisa had once opened her eyes, but soon closed them again, without

apparent consciousness. This had been a proof of life, however, of

service to her sister; and Henrietta, though perfectly incapable of

being in the same room with Louisa, was kept, by the agitation of hope

and fear, from a return of her own insensibility. Mary, too, was

growing calmer.

The surgeon was with them almost before it had seemed possible. They

were sick with horror, while he examined; but he was not hopeless. The

head had received a severe contusion, but he had seen greater injuries

recovered from: he was by no means hopeless; he spoke cheerfully.

That he did not regard it as a desperate case, that he did not say a

few hours must end it, was at first felt, beyond the hope of most; and

the ecstasy of such a reprieve, the rejoicing, deep and silent, after a

few fervent ejaculations of gratitude to Heaven had been offered, may

be conceived.

The tone, the look, with which “Thank God!” was uttered by Captain

Wentworth, Anne was sure could never be forgotten by her; nor the sight

of him afterwards, as he sat near a table, leaning over it with folded

arms and face concealed, as if overpowered by the various feelings of

his soul, and trying by prayer and reflection to calm them.

Louisa’s limbs had escaped. There was no injury but to the head.

It now became necessary for the party to consider what was best to be

done, as to their general situation. They were now able to speak to

each other and consult. That Louisa must remain where she was, however

distressing to her friends to be involving the Harvilles in such

trouble, did not admit a doubt. Her removal was impossible. The

Harvilles silenced all scruples; and, as much as they could, all

gratitude. They had looked forward and arranged everything before the

others began to reflect. Captain Benwick must give up his room to them,

and get another bed elsewhere; and the whole was settled. They were

only concerned that the house could accommodate no more; and yet

perhaps, by “putting the children away in the maid’s room, or swinging

a cot somewhere,” they could hardly bear to think of not finding room

for two or three besides, supposing they might wish to stay; though,

with regard to any attendance on Miss Musgrove, there need not be the

least uneasiness in leaving her to Mrs Harville’s care entirely. Mrs

Harville was a very experienced nurse, and her nursery-maid, who had

lived with her long, and gone about with her everywhere, was just such

another. Between these two, she could want no possible attendance by

day or night. And all this was said with a truth and sincerity of

feeling irresistible.

Charles, Henrietta, and Captain Wentworth were the three in

consultation, and for a little while it was only an interchange of

perplexity and terror. “Uppercross, the necessity of some one’s going

to Uppercross; the news to be conveyed; how it could be broken to Mr

and Mrs Musgrove; the lateness of the morning; an hour already gone

since they ought to have been off; the impossibility of being in

tolerable time.” At first, they were capable of nothing more to the

purpose than such exclamations; but, after a while, Captain Wentworth,

exerting himself, said—

“We must be decided, and without the loss of another minute. Every

minute is valuable. Some one must resolve on being off for Uppercross

instantly. Musgrove, either you or I must go.”

Charles agreed, but declared his resolution of not going away. He would

be as little incumbrance as possible to Captain and Mrs Harville; but

as to leaving his sister in such a state, he neither ought, nor would.

So far it was decided; and Henrietta at first declared the same. She,

however, was soon persuaded to think differently. The usefulness of her

staying! She who had not been able to remain in Louisa’s room, or to

look at her, without sufferings which made her worse than helpless! She

was forced to acknowledge that she could do no good, yet was still

unwilling to be away, till, touched by the thought of her father and

mother, she gave it up; she consented, she was anxious to be at home.

The plan had reached this point, when Anne, coming quietly down from

Louisa’s room, could not but hear what followed, for the parlour door

was open.

“Then it is settled, Musgrove,” cried Captain Wentworth, “that you

stay, and that I take care of your sister home. But as to the rest, as

to the others, if one stays to assist Mrs Harville, I think it need be

only one. Mrs Charles Musgrove will, of course, wish to get back to her

children; but if Anne will stay, no one so proper, so capable as Anne.”

She paused a moment to recover from the emotion of hearing herself so

spoken of. The other two warmly agreed with what he said, and she then

appeared.

“You will stay, I am sure; you will stay and nurse her;” cried he,

turning to her and speaking with a glow, and yet a gentleness, which

seemed almost restoring the past. She coloured deeply, and he

recollected himself and moved away. She expressed herself most willing,

ready, happy to remain. “It was what she had been thinking of, and

wishing to be allowed to do. A bed on the floor in Louisa’s room would

be sufficient for her, if Mrs Harville would but think so.”

One thing more, and all seemed arranged. Though it was rather desirable

that Mr and Mrs Musgrove should be previously alarmed by some share of

delay; yet the time required by the Uppercross horses to take them

back, would be a dreadful extension of suspense; and Captain Wentworth

proposed, and Charles Musgrove agreed, that it would be much better for

him to take a chaise from the inn, and leave Mr Musgrove’s carriage and

horses to be sent home the next morning early, when there would be the

farther advantage of sending an account of Louisa’s night.

Captain Wentworth now hurried off to get everything ready on his part,

and to be soon followed by the two ladies. When the plan was made known

to Mary, however, there was an end of all peace in it. She was so

wretched and so vehement, complained so much of injustice in being

expected to go away instead of Anne; Anne, who was nothing to Louisa,

while she was her sister, and had the best right to stay in Henrietta’s

stead! Why was not she to be as useful as Anne? And to go home without

Charles, too, without her husband! No, it was too unkind. And in short,

she said more than her husband could long withstand, and as none of the

others could oppose when he gave way, there was no help for it; the

change of Mary for Anne was inevitable.

Anne had never submitted more reluctantly to the jealous and

ill-judging claims of Mary; but so it must be, and they set off for the

town, Charles taking care of his sister, and Captain Benwick attending

to her. She gave a moment’s recollection, as they hurried along, to the

little circumstances which the same spots had witnessed earlier in the

morning. There she had listened to Henrietta’s schemes for Dr Shirley’s

leaving Uppercross; farther on, she had first seen Mr Elliot; a moment

seemed all that could now be given to any one but Louisa, or those who

were wrapped up in her welfare.

Captain Benwick was most considerately attentive to her; and, united as

they all seemed by the distress of the day, she felt an increasing

degree of good-will towards him, and a pleasure even in thinking that

it might, perhaps, be the occasion of continuing their acquaintance.

Captain Wentworth was on the watch for them, and a chaise and four in

waiting, stationed for their convenience in the lowest part of the

street; but his evident surprise and vexation at the substitution of

one sister for the other, the change in his countenance, the

astonishment, the expressions begun and suppressed, with which Charles

was listened to, made but a mortifying reception of Anne; or must at

least convince her that she was valued only as she could be useful to

Louisa.

She endeavoured to be composed, and to be just. Without emulating the

feelings of an Emma towards her Henry, she would have attended on

Louisa with a zeal above the common claims of regard, for his sake; and

she hoped he would not long be so unjust as to suppose she would shrink

unnecessarily from the office of a friend.

In the meanwhile she was in the carriage. He had handed them both in,

and placed himself between them; and in this manner, under these

circumstances, full of astonishment and emotion to Anne, she quitted

Lyme. How the long stage would pass; how it was to affect their

manners; what was to be their sort of intercourse, she could not

foresee. It was all quite natural, however. He was devoted to

Henrietta; always turning towards her; and when he spoke at all, always

with the view of supporting her hopes and raising her spirits. In

general, his voice and manner were studiously calm. To spare Henrietta

from agitation seemed the governing principle. Once only, when she had

been grieving over the last ill-judged, ill-fated walk to the Cobb,

bitterly lamenting that it ever had been thought of, he burst forth, as

if wholly overcome—

“Don’t talk of it, don’t talk of it,” he cried. “Oh God! that I had not

given way to her at the fatal moment! Had I done as I ought! But so

eager and so resolute! Dear, sweet Louisa!”

Anne wondered whether it ever occurred to him now, to question the

justness of his own previous opinion as to the universal felicity and

advantage of firmness of character; and whether it might not strike him

that, like all other qualities of the mind, it should have its

proportions and limits. She thought it could scarcely escape him to

feel that a persuadable temper might sometimes be as much in favour of

happiness as a very resolute character.

They got on fast. Anne was astonished to recognise the same hills and

the same objects so soon. Their actual speed, heightened by some dread

of the conclusion, made the road appear but half as long as on the day

before. It was growing quite dusk, however, before they were in the

neighbourhood of Uppercross, and there had been total silence among

them for some time, Henrietta leaning back in the corner, with a shawl

over her face, giving the hope of her having cried herself to sleep;

when, as they were going up their last hill, Anne found herself all at

once addressed by Captain Wentworth. In a low, cautious voice, he

said:—

“I have been considering what we had best do. She must not appear at

first. She could not stand it. I have been thinking whether you had not

better remain in the carriage with her, while I go in and break it to

Mr and Mrs Musgrove. Do you think this is a good plan?”

She did: he was satisfied, and said no more. But the remembrance of the

appeal remained a pleasure to her, as a proof of friendship, and of

deference for her judgement, a great pleasure; and when it became a

sort of parting proof, its value did not lessen.

When the distressing communication at Uppercross was over, and he had

seen the father and mother quite as composed as could be hoped, and the

daughter all the better for being with them, he announced his intention

of returning in the same carriage to Lyme; and when the horses were

baited, he was off.

(End of volume one.)

CHAPTER XIII.

The remainder of Anne’s time at Uppercross, comprehending only two

days, was spent entirely at the Mansion House; and she had the

satisfaction of knowing herself extremely useful there, both as an

immediate companion, and as assisting in all those arrangements for the

future, which, in Mr and Mrs Musgrove’s distressed state of spirits,

would have been difficulties.

They had an early account from Lyme the next morning. Louisa was much

the same. No symptoms worse than before had appeared. Charles came a

few hours afterwards, to bring a later and more particular account. He

was tolerably cheerful. A speedy cure must not be hoped, but everything

was going on as well as the nature of the case admitted. In speaking of

the Harvilles, he seemed unable to satisfy his own sense of their

kindness, especially of Mrs Harville’s exertions as a nurse. “She

really left nothing for Mary to do. He and Mary had been persuaded to

go early to their inn last night. Mary had been hysterical again this

morning. When he came away, she was going to walk out with Captain

Benwick, which, he hoped, would do her good. He almost wished she had

been prevailed on to come home the day before; but the truth was, that

Mrs Harville left nothing for anybody to do.”

Charles was to return to Lyme the same afternoon, and his father had at

first half a mind to go with him, but the ladies could not consent. It

would be going only to multiply trouble to the others, and increase his

own distress; and a much better scheme followed and was acted upon. A

chaise was sent for from Crewkherne, and Charles conveyed back a far

more useful person in the old nursery-maid of the family, one who

having brought up all the children, and seen the very last, the

lingering and long-petted Master Harry, sent to school after his

brothers, was now living in her deserted nursery to mend stockings and

dress all the blains and bruises she could get near her, and who,

consequently, was only too happy in being allowed to go and help nurse

dear Miss Louisa. Vague wishes of getting Sarah thither, had occurred

before to Mrs Musgrove and Henrietta; but without Anne, it would hardly

have been resolved on, and found practicable so soon.

They were indebted, the next day, to Charles Hayter, for all the minute

knowledge of Louisa, which it was so essential to obtain every

twenty-four hours. He made it his business to go to Lyme, and his

account was still encouraging. The intervals of sense and consciousness

were believed to be stronger. Every report agreed in Captain

Wentworth’s appearing fixed in Lyme.

Anne was to leave them on the morrow, an event which they all dreaded.

“What should they do without her? They were wretched comforters for one

another.” And so much was said in this way, that Anne thought she could

not do better than impart among them the general inclination to which

she was privy, and persuaded them all to go to Lyme at once. She had

little difficulty; it was soon determined that they would go; go

to-morrow, fix themselves at the inn, or get into lodgings, as it

suited, and there remain till dear Louisa could be moved. They must be

taking off some trouble from the good people she was with; they might

at least relieve Mrs Harville from the care of her own children; and in

short, they were so happy in the decision, that Anne was delighted with

what she had done, and felt that she could not spend her last morning

at Uppercross better than in assisting their preparations, and sending

them off at an early hour, though her being left to the solitary range

of the house was the consequence.

She was the last, excepting the little boys at the cottage, she was the

very last, the only remaining one of all that had filled and animated

both houses, of all that had given Uppercross its cheerful character. A

few days had made a change indeed!

If Louisa recovered, it would all be well again. More than former

happiness would be restored. There could not be a doubt, to her mind

there was none, of what would follow her recovery. A few months hence,

and the room now so deserted, occupied but by her silent, pensive self,

might be filled again with all that was happy and gay, all that was

glowing and bright in prosperous love, all that was most unlike Anne

Elliot!

An hour’s complete leisure for such reflections as these, on a dark

November day, a small thick rain almost blotting out the very few

objects ever to be discerned from the windows, was enough to make the

sound of Lady Russell’s carriage exceedingly welcome; and yet, though

desirous to be gone, she could not quit the Mansion House, or look an

adieu to the Cottage, with its black, dripping and comfortless veranda,

or even notice through the misty glasses the last humble tenements of

the village, without a saddened heart. Scenes had passed in Uppercross

which made it precious. It stood the record of many sensations of pain,

once severe, but now softened; and of some instances of relenting

feeling, some breathings of friendship and reconciliation, which could

never be looked for again, and which could never cease to be dear. She

left it all behind her, all but the recollection that such things had

been.

Anne had never entered Kellynch since her quitting Lady Russell’s house

in September. It had not been necessary, and the few occasions of its

being possible for her to go to the Hall she had contrived to evade and

escape from. Her first return was to resume her place in the modern and

elegant apartments of the Lodge, and to gladden the eyes of its

mistress.

There was some anxiety mixed with Lady Russell’s joy in meeting her.

She knew who had been frequenting Uppercross. But happily, either Anne

was improved in plumpness and looks, or Lady Russell fancied her so;

and Anne, in receiving her compliments on the occasion, had the

amusement of connecting them with the silent admiration of her cousin,

and of hoping that she was to be blessed with a second spring of youth

and beauty.

When they came to converse, she was soon sensible of some mental

change. The subjects of which her heart had been full on leaving

Kellynch, and which she had felt slighted, and been compelled to

smother among the Musgroves, were now become but of secondary interest.

She had lately lost sight even of her father and sister and Bath. Their

concerns had been sunk under those of Uppercross; and when Lady Russell

reverted to their former hopes and fears, and spoke her satisfaction in

the house in Camden Place, which had been taken, and her regret that

Mrs Clay should still be with them, Anne would have been ashamed to

have it known how much more she was thinking of Lyme and Louisa

Musgrove, and all her acquaintance there; how much more interesting to

her was the home and the friendship of the Harvilles and Captain

Benwick, than her own father’s house in Camden Place, or her own

sister’s intimacy with Mrs Clay. She was actually forced to exert

herself to meet Lady Russell with anything like the appearance of equal

solicitude, on topics which had by nature the first claim on her.

There was a little awkwardness at first in their discourse on another

subject. They must speak of the accident at Lyme. Lady Russell had not

been arrived five minutes the day before, when a full account of the

whole had burst on her; but still it must be talked of, she must make

enquiries, she must regret the imprudence, lament the result, and

Captain Wentworth’s name must be mentioned by both. Anne was conscious

of not doing it so well as Lady Russell. She could not speak the name,

and look straight forward to Lady Russell’s eye, till she had adopted

the expedient of telling her briefly what she thought of the attachment

between him and Louisa. When this was told, his name distressed her no

longer.

Lady Russell had only to listen composedly, and wish them happy, but

internally her heart revelled in angry pleasure, in pleased contempt,

that the man who at twenty-three had seemed to understand somewhat of

the value of an Anne Elliot, should, eight years afterwards, be charmed

by a Louisa Musgrove.

The first three or four days passed most quietly, with no circumstance

to mark them excepting the receipt of a note or two from Lyme, which

found their way to Anne, she could not tell how, and brought a rather

improving account of Louisa. At the end of that period, Lady Russell’s

politeness could repose no longer, and the fainter self-threatenings of

the past became in a decided tone, “I must call on Mrs Croft; I really

must call upon her soon. Anne, have you courage to go with me, and pay

a visit in that house? It will be some trial to us both.”

Anne did not shrink from it; on the contrary, she truly felt as she

said, in observing—

“I think you are very likely to suffer the most of the two; your

feelings are less reconciled to the change than mine. By remaining in

the neighbourhood, I am become inured to it.”

She could have said more on the subject; for she had in fact so high an

opinion of the Crofts, and considered her father so very fortunate in

his tenants, felt the parish to be so sure of a good example, and the

poor of the best attention and relief, that however sorry and ashamed

for the necessity of the removal, she could not but in conscience feel

that they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch Hall

had passed into better hands than its owners’. These convictions must

unquestionably have their own pain, and severe was its kind; but they

precluded that pain which Lady Russell would suffer in entering the

house again, and returning through the well-known apartments.

In such moments Anne had no power of saying to herself, “These rooms

ought to belong only to us. Oh, how fallen in their destination! How

unworthily occupied! An ancient family to be so driven away! Strangers

filling their place!” No, except when she thought of her mother, and

remembered where she had been used to sit and preside, she had no sigh

of that description to heave.

Mrs Croft always met her with a kindness which gave her the pleasure of

fancying herself a favourite, and on the present occasion, receiving

her in that house, there was particular attention.

The sad accident at Lyme was soon the prevailing topic, and on

comparing their latest accounts of the invalid, it appeared that each

lady dated her intelligence from the same hour of yestermorn; that

Captain Wentworth had been in Kellynch yesterday (the first time since

the accident), had brought Anne the last note, which she had not been

able to trace the exact steps of; had staid a few hours and then

returned again to Lyme, and without any present intention of quitting

it any more. He had enquired after her, she found, particularly; had

expressed his hope of Miss Elliot’s not being the worse for her

exertions, and had spoken of those exertions as great. This was

handsome, and gave her more pleasure than almost anything else could

have done.

As to the sad catastrophe itself, it could be canvassed only in one

style by a couple of steady, sensible women, whose judgements had to

work on ascertained events; and it was perfectly decided that it had

been the consequence of much thoughtlessness and much imprudence; that

its effects were most alarming, and that it was frightful to think, how

long Miss Musgrove’s recovery might yet be doubtful, and how liable she

would still remain to suffer from the concussion hereafter! The Admiral

wound it up summarily by exclaiming—

“Ay, a very bad business indeed. A new sort of way this, for a young

fellow to be making love, by breaking his mistress’s head, is not it,

Miss Elliot? This is breaking a head and giving a plaster, truly!”

Admiral Croft’s manners were not quite of the tone to suit Lady

Russell, but they delighted Anne. His goodness of heart and simplicity

of character were irresistible.

“Now, this must be very bad for you,” said he, suddenly rousing from a

little reverie, “to be coming and finding us here. I had not

recollected it before, I declare, but it must be very bad. But now, do

not stand upon ceremony. Get up and go over all the rooms in the house

if you like it.”

“Another time, Sir, I thank you, not now.”

“Well, whenever it suits you. You can slip in from the shrubbery at any

time; and there you will find we keep our umbrellas hanging up by that

door. A good place is not it? But,” (checking himself), “you will not

think it a good place, for yours were always kept in the butler’s room.

Ay, so it always is, I believe. One man’s ways may be as good as

another’s, but we all like our own best. And so you must judge for

yourself, whether it would be better for you to go about the house or

not.”

Anne, finding she might decline it, did so, very gratefully.

“We have made very few changes either,” continued the Admiral, after

thinking a moment. “Very few. We told you about the laundry-door, at

Uppercross. That has been a very great improvement. The wonder was, how

any family upon earth could bear with the inconvenience of its opening

as it did, so long! You will tell Sir Walter what we have done, and

that Mr Shepherd thinks it the greatest improvement the house ever had.

Indeed, I must do ourselves the justice to say, that the few

alterations we have made have been all very much for the better. My

wife should have the credit of them, however. I have done very little

besides sending away some of the large looking-glasses from my

dressing-room, which was your father’s. A very good man, and very much

the gentleman I am sure: but I should think, Miss Elliot,” (looking

with serious reflection), “I should think he must be rather a dressy

man for his time of life. Such a number of looking-glasses! oh Lord!

there was no getting away from one’s self. So I got Sophy to lend me a

hand, and we soon shifted their quarters; and now I am quite snug, with

my little shaving glass in one corner, and another great thing that I

never go near.”

Anne, amused in spite of herself, was rather distressed for an answer,

and the Admiral, fearing he might not have been civil enough, took up

the subject again, to say—

“The next time you write to your good father, Miss Elliot, pray give

him my compliments and Mrs Croft’s, and say that we are settled here

quite to our liking, and have no fault at all to find with the place.

The breakfast-room chimney smokes a little, I grant you, but it is only

when the wind is due north and blows hard, which may not happen three

times a winter. And take it altogether, now that we have been into most

of the houses hereabouts and can judge, there is not one that we like

better than this. Pray say so, with my compliments. He will be glad to

hear it.”

Lady Russell and Mrs Croft were very well pleased with each other: but

the acquaintance which this visit began was fated not to proceed far at

present; for when it was returned, the Crofts announced themselves to

be going away for a few weeks, to visit their connexions in the north

of the county, and probably might not be at home again before Lady

Russell would be removing to Bath.

So ended all danger to Anne of meeting Captain Wentworth at Kellynch

Hall, or of seeing him in company with her friend. Everything was safe

enough, and she smiled over the many anxious feelings she had wasted on

the subject.

CHAPTER XIV.

Though Charles and Mary had remained at Lyme much longer after Mr and

Mrs Musgrove’s going than Anne conceived they could have been at all

wanted, they were yet the first of the family to be at home again; and

as soon as possible after their return to Uppercross they drove over to

the Lodge. They had left Louisa beginning to sit up; but her head,

though clear, was exceedingly weak, and her nerves susceptible to the

highest extreme of tenderness; and though she might be pronounced to be

altogether doing very well, it was still impossible to say when she

might be able to bear the removal home; and her father and mother, who

must return in time to receive their younger children for the Christmas

holidays, had hardly a hope of being allowed to bring her with them.

They had been all in lodgings together. Mrs Musgrove had got Mrs

Harville’s children away as much as she could, every possible supply

from Uppercross had been furnished, to lighten the inconvenience to the

Harvilles, while the Harvilles had been wanting them to come to dinner

every day; and in short, it seemed to have been only a struggle on each

side as to which should be most disinterested and hospitable.

Mary had had her evils; but upon the whole, as was evident by her

staying so long, she had found more to enjoy than to suffer. Charles

Hayter had been at Lyme oftener than suited her; and when they dined

with the Harvilles there had been only a maid-servant to wait, and at

first Mrs Harville had always given Mrs Musgrove precedence; but then,

she had received so very handsome an apology from her on finding out

whose daughter she was, and there had been so much going on every day,

there had been so many walks between their lodgings and the Harvilles,

and she had got books from the library, and changed them so often, that

the balance had certainly been much in favour of Lyme. She had been

taken to Charmouth too, and she had bathed, and she had gone to church,

and there were a great many more people to look at in the church at

Lyme than at Uppercross; and all this, joined to the sense of being so

very useful, had made really an agreeable fortnight.

Anne enquired after Captain Benwick. Mary’s face was clouded directly.

Charles laughed.

“Oh! Captain Benwick is very well, I believe, but he is a very odd

young man. I do not know what he would be at. We asked him to come home

with us for a day or two: Charles undertook to give him some shooting,

and he seemed quite delighted, and, for my part, I thought it was all

settled; when behold! on Tuesday night, he made a very awkward sort of

excuse; ‘he never shot’ and he had ‘been quite misunderstood,’ and he

had promised this and he had promised that, and the end of it was, I

found, that he did not mean to come. I suppose he was afraid of finding

it dull; but upon my word I should have thought we were lively enough

at the Cottage for such a heart-broken man as Captain Benwick.”

Charles laughed again and said, “Now Mary, you know very well how it

really was. It was all your doing,” (turning to Anne). “He fancied that

if he went with us, he should find you close by: he fancied everybody

to be living in Uppercross; and when he discovered that Lady Russell

lived three miles off, his heart failed him, and he had not courage to

come. That is the fact, upon my honour. Mary knows it is.”

But Mary did not give into it very graciously, whether from not

considering Captain Benwick entitled by birth and situation to be in

love with an Elliot, or from not wanting to believe Anne a greater

attraction to Uppercross than herself, must be left to be guessed.

Anne’s good-will, however, was not to be lessened by what she heard.

She boldly acknowledged herself flattered, and continued her enquiries.

“Oh! he talks of you,” cried Charles, “in such terms—” Mary interrupted

him. “I declare, Charles, I never heard him mention Anne twice all the

time I was there. I declare, Anne, he never talks of you at all.”

“No,” admitted Charles, “I do not know that he ever does, in a general

way; but however, it is a very clear thing that he admires you

exceedingly. His head is full of some books that he is reading upon

your recommendation, and he wants to talk to you about them; he has

found out something or other in one of them which he thinks—oh! I

cannot pretend to remember it, but it was something very fine—I

overheard him telling Henrietta all about it; and then ‘Miss Elliot’

was spoken of in the highest terms! Now Mary, I declare it was so, I

heard it myself, and you were in the other room. ‘Elegance, sweetness,

beauty.’ Oh! there was no end of Miss Elliot’s charms.”

“And I am sure,” cried Mary, warmly, “it was a very little to his

credit, if he did. Miss Harville only died last June. Such a heart is

very little worth having; is it, Lady Russell? I am sure you will agree

with me.”

“I must see Captain Benwick before I decide,” said Lady Russell,

smiling.

“And that you are very likely to do very soon, I can tell you, ma’am,”

said Charles. “Though he had not nerves for coming away with us, and

setting off again afterwards to pay a formal visit here, he will make

his way over to Kellynch one day by himself, you may depend on it. I

told him the distance and the road, and I told him of the church’s

being so very well worth seeing; for as he has a taste for those sort

of things, I thought that would be a good excuse, and he listened with

all his understanding and soul; and I am sure from his manner that you

will have him calling here soon. So, I give you notice, Lady Russell.”

“Any acquaintance of Anne’s will always be welcome to me,” was Lady

Russell’s kind answer.

“Oh! as to being Anne’s acquaintance,” said Mary, “I think he is rather

my acquaintance, for I have been seeing him every day this last

fortnight.”

“Well, as your joint acquaintance, then, I shall be very happy to see

Captain Benwick.”

“You will not find anything very agreeable in him, I assure you, ma’am.

He is one of the dullest young men that ever lived. He has walked with

me, sometimes, from one end of the sands to the other, without saying a

word. He is not at all a well-bred young man. I am sure you will not

like him.”

“There we differ, Mary,” said Anne. “I think Lady Russell would like

him. I think she would be so much pleased with his mind, that she would

very soon see no deficiency in his manner.”

“So do I, Anne,” said Charles. “I am sure Lady Russell would like him.

He is just Lady Russell’s sort. Give him a book, and he will read all

day long.”

“Yes, that he will!” exclaimed Mary, tauntingly. “He will sit poring

over his book, and not know when a person speaks to him, or when one

drops one’s scissors, or anything that happens. Do you think Lady

Russell would like that?”

Lady Russell could not help laughing. “Upon my word,” said she, “I

should not have supposed that my opinion of any one could have admitted

of such difference of conjecture, steady and matter of fact as I may

call myself. I have really a curiosity to see the person who can give

occasion to such directly opposite notions. I wish he may be induced to

call here. And when he does, Mary, you may depend upon hearing my

opinion; but I am determined not to judge him beforehand.”

“You will not like him, I will answer for it.”

Lady Russell began talking of something else. Mary spoke with animation

of their meeting with, or rather missing, Mr Elliot so extraordinarily.

“He is a man,” said Lady Russell, “whom I have no wish to see. His

declining to be on cordial terms with the head of his family, has left

a very strong impression in his disfavour with me.”

This decision checked Mary’s eagerness, and stopped her short in the

midst of the Elliot countenance.

With regard to Captain Wentworth, though Anne hazarded no enquiries,

there was voluntary communication sufficient. His spirits had been

greatly recovering lately as might be expected. As Louisa improved, he

had improved, and he was now quite a different creature from what he

had been the first week. He had not seen Louisa; and was so extremely

fearful of any ill consequence to her from an interview, that he did

not press for it at all; and, on the contrary, seemed to have a plan of

going away for a week or ten days, till her head was stronger. He had

talked of going down to Plymouth for a week, and wanted to persuade

Captain Benwick to go with him; but, as Charles maintained to the last,

Captain Benwick seemed much more disposed to ride over to Kellynch.

There can be no doubt that Lady Russell and Anne were both occasionally

thinking of Captain Benwick, from this time. Lady Russell could not

hear the door-bell without feeling that it might be his herald; nor

could Anne return from any stroll of solitary indulgence in her

father’s grounds, or any visit of charity in the village, without

wondering whether she might see him or hear of him. Captain Benwick

came not, however. He was either less disposed for it than Charles had

imagined, or he was too shy; and after giving him a week’s indulgence,

Lady Russell determined him to be unworthy of the interest which he had

been beginning to excite.

The Musgroves came back to receive their happy boys and girls from

school, bringing with them Mrs Harville’s little children, to improve

the noise of Uppercross, and lessen that of Lyme. Henrietta remained

with Louisa; but all the rest of the family were again in their usual

quarters.

Lady Russell and Anne paid their compliments to them once, when Anne

could not but feel that Uppercross was already quite alive again.

Though neither Henrietta, nor Louisa, nor Charles Hayter, nor Captain

Wentworth were there, the room presented as strong a contrast as could

be wished to the last state she had seen it in.

Immediately surrounding Mrs Musgrove were the little Harvilles, whom

she was sedulously guarding from the tyranny of the two children from

the Cottage, expressly arrived to amuse them. On one side was a table

occupied by some chattering girls, cutting up silk and gold paper; and

on the other were tressels and trays, bending under the weight of brawn

and cold pies, where riotous boys were holding high revel; the whole

completed by a roaring Christmas fire, which seemed determined to be

heard, in spite of all the noise of the others. Charles and Mary also

came in, of course, during their visit, and Mr Musgrove made a point of

paying his respects to Lady Russell, and sat down close to her for ten

minutes, talking with a very raised voice, but from the clamour of the

children on his knees, generally in vain. It was a fine family-piece.

Anne, judging from her own temperament, would have deemed such a

domestic hurricane a bad restorative of the nerves, which Louisa’s

illness must have so greatly shaken. But Mrs Musgrove, who got Anne

near her on purpose to thank her most cordially, again and again, for

all her attentions to them, concluded a short recapitulation of what

she had suffered herself by observing, with a happy glance round the

room, that after all she had gone through, nothing was so likely to do

her good as a little quiet cheerfulness at home.

Louisa was now recovering apace. Her mother could even think of her

being able to join their party at home, before her brothers and sisters

went to school again. The Harvilles had promised to come with her and

stay at Uppercross, whenever she returned. Captain Wentworth was gone,

for the present, to see his brother in Shropshire.

“I hope I shall remember, in future,” said Lady Russell, as soon as

they were reseated in the carriage, “not to call at Uppercross in the

Christmas holidays.”

Everybody has their taste in noises as well as in other matters; and

sounds are quite innoxious, or most distressing, by their sort rather

than their quantity. When Lady Russell not long afterwards, was

entering Bath on a wet afternoon, and driving through the long course

of streets from the Old Bridge to Camden Place, amidst the dash of

other carriages, the heavy rumble of carts and drays, the bawling of

newspapermen, muffin-men and milkmen, and the ceaseless clink of

pattens, she made no complaint. No, these were noises which belonged to

the winter pleasures; her spirits rose under their influence; and like

Mrs Musgrove, she was feeling, though not saying, that after being long

in the country, nothing could be so good for her as a little quiet

cheerfulness.

Anne did not share these feelings. She persisted in a very determined,

though very silent disinclination for Bath; caught the first dim view

of the extensive buildings, smoking in rain, without any wish of seeing

them better; felt their progress through the streets to be, however

disagreeable, yet too rapid; for who would be glad to see her when she

arrived? And looked back, with fond regret, to the bustles of

Uppercross and the seclusion of Kellynch.

Elizabeth’s last letter had communicated a piece of news of some

interest. Mr Elliot was in Bath. He had called in Camden Place; had

called a second time, a third; had been pointedly attentive. If

Elizabeth and her father did not deceive themselves, had been taking

much pains to seek the acquaintance, and proclaim the value of the

connection, as he had formerly taken pains to shew neglect. This was

very wonderful if it were true; and Lady Russell was in a state of very

agreeable curiosity and perplexity about Mr Elliot, already recanting

the sentiment she had so lately expressed to Mary, of his being “a man

whom she had no wish to see.” She had a great wish to see him. If he

really sought to reconcile himself like a dutiful branch, he must be

forgiven for having dismembered himself from the paternal tree.

Anne was not animated to an equal pitch by the circumstance, but she

felt that she would rather see Mr Elliot again than not, which was more

than she could say for many other persons in Bath.

She was put down in Camden Place; and Lady Russell then drove to her

own lodgings, in Rivers Street.

CHAPTER XV.

Sir Walter had taken a very good house in Camden Place, a lofty

dignified situation, such as becomes a man of consequence; and both he

and Elizabeth were settled there, much to their satisfaction.

Anne entered it with a sinking heart, anticipating an imprisonment of

many months, and anxiously saying to herself, “Oh! when shall I leave

you again?” A degree of unexpected cordiality, however, in the welcome

she received, did her good. Her father and sister were glad to see her,

for the sake of shewing her the house and furniture, and met her with

kindness. Her making a fourth, when they sat down to dinner, was

noticed as an advantage.

Mrs Clay was very pleasant, and very smiling, but her courtesies and

smiles were more a matter of course. Anne had always felt that she

would pretend what was proper on her arrival, but the complaisance of

the others was unlooked for. They were evidently in excellent spirits,

and she was soon to listen to the causes. They had no inclination to

listen to her. After laying out for some compliments of being deeply

regretted in their old neighbourhood, which Anne could not pay, they

had only a few faint enquiries to make, before the talk must be all

their own. Uppercross excited no interest, Kellynch very little: it was

all Bath.

They had the pleasure of assuring her that Bath more than answered

their expectations in every respect. Their house was undoubtedly the

best in Camden Place; their drawing-rooms had many decided advantages

over all the others which they had either seen or heard of, and the

superiority was not less in the style of the fitting-up, or the taste

of the furniture. Their acquaintance was exceedingly sought after.

Everybody was wanting to visit them. They had drawn back from many

introductions, and still were perpetually having cards left by people

of whom they knew nothing.

Here were funds of enjoyment. Could Anne wonder that her father and

sister were happy? She might not wonder, but she must sigh that her

father should feel no degradation in his change, should see nothing to

regret in the duties and dignity of the resident landholder, should

find so much to be vain of in the littlenesses of a town; and she must

sigh, and smile, and wonder too, as Elizabeth threw open the

folding-doors and walked with exultation from one drawing-room to the

other, boasting of their space; at the possibility of that woman, who

had been mistress of Kellynch Hall, finding extent to be proud of

between two walls, perhaps thirty feet asunder.

But this was not all which they had to make them happy. They had Mr

Elliot too. Anne had a great deal to hear of Mr Elliot. He was not only

pardoned, they were delighted with him. He had been in Bath about a

fortnight; (he had passed through Bath in November, in his way to

London, when the intelligence of Sir Walter’s being settled there had

of course reached him, though only twenty-four hours in the place, but

he had not been able to avail himself of it;) but he had now been a

fortnight in Bath, and his first object on arriving, had been to leave

his card in Camden Place, following it up by such assiduous endeavours

to meet, and when they did meet, by such great openness of conduct,

such readiness to apologize for the past, such solicitude to be

received as a relation again, that their former good understanding was

completely re-established.

They had not a fault to find in him. He had explained away all the

appearance of neglect on his own side. It had originated in

misapprehension entirely. He had never had an idea of throwing himself

off; he had feared that he was thrown off, but knew not why, and

delicacy had kept him silent. Upon the hint of having spoken

disrespectfully or carelessly of the family and the family honours, he

was quite indignant. He, who had ever boasted of being an Elliot, and

whose feelings, as to connection, were only too strict to suit the

unfeudal tone of the present day. He was astonished, indeed, but his

character and general conduct must refute it. He could refer Sir Walter

to all who knew him; and certainly, the pains he had been taking on

this, the first opportunity of reconciliation, to be restored to the

footing of a relation and heir-presumptive, was a strong proof of his

opinions on the subject.

The circumstances of his marriage, too, were found to admit of much

extenuation. This was an article not to be entered on by himself; but a

very intimate friend of his, a Colonel Wallis, a highly respectable

man, perfectly the gentleman, (and not an ill-looking man, Sir Walter

added), who was living in very good style in Marlborough Buildings, and

had, at his own particular request, been admitted to their acquaintance

through Mr Elliot, had mentioned one or two things relative to the

marriage, which made a material difference in the discredit of it.

Colonel Wallis had known Mr Elliot long, had been well acquainted also

with his wife, had perfectly understood the whole story. She was

certainly not a woman of family, but well educated, accomplished, rich,

and excessively in love with his friend. There had been the charm. She

had sought him. Without that attraction, not all her money would have

tempted Elliot, and Sir Walter was, moreover, assured of her having

been a very fine woman. Here was a great deal to soften the business. A

very fine woman with a large fortune, in love with him! Sir Walter

seemed to admit it as complete apology; and though Elizabeth could not

see the circumstance in quite so favourable a light, she allowed it be

a great extenuation.

Mr Elliot had called repeatedly, had dined with them once, evidently

delighted by the distinction of being asked, for they gave no dinners

in general; delighted, in short, by every proof of cousinly notice, and

placing his whole happiness in being on intimate terms in Camden Place.

Anne listened, but without quite understanding it. Allowances, large

allowances, she knew, must be made for the ideas of those who spoke.

She heard it all under embellishment. All that sounded extravagant or

irrational in the progress of the reconciliation might have no origin

but in the language of the relators. Still, however, she had the

sensation of there being something more than immediately appeared, in

Mr Elliot’s wishing, after an interval of so many years, to be well

received by them. In a worldly view, he had nothing to gain by being on

terms with Sir Walter; nothing to risk by a state of variance. In all

probability he was already the richer of the two, and the Kellynch

estate would as surely be his hereafter as the title. A sensible man,

and he had looked like a very sensible man, why should it be an object

to him? She could only offer one solution; it was, perhaps, for

Elizabeth’s sake. There might really have been a liking formerly,

though convenience and accident had drawn him a different way; and now

that he could afford to please himself, he might mean to pay his

addresses to her. Elizabeth was certainly very handsome, with

well-bred, elegant manners, and her character might never have been

penetrated by Mr Elliot, knowing her but in public, and when very young

himself. How her temper and understanding might bear the investigation

of his present keener time of life was another concern and rather a

fearful one. Most earnestly did she wish that he might not be too nice,

or too observant if Elizabeth were his object; and that Elizabeth was

disposed to believe herself so, and that her friend Mrs Clay was

encouraging the idea, seemed apparent by a glance or two between them,

while Mr Elliot’s frequent visits were talked of.

Anne mentioned the glimpses she had had of him at Lyme, but without

being much attended to. “Oh! yes, perhaps, it had been Mr Elliot. They

did not know. It might be him, perhaps.” They could not listen to her

description of him. They were describing him themselves; Sir Walter

especially. He did justice to his very gentlemanlike appearance, his

air of elegance and fashion, his good shaped face, his sensible eye;

but, at the same time, “must lament his being very much under-hung, a

defect which time seemed to have increased; nor could he pretend to say

that ten years had not altered almost every feature for the worse. Mr

Elliot appeared to think that he (Sir Walter) was looking exactly as he

had done when they last parted;” but Sir Walter had “not been able to

return the compliment entirely, which had embarrassed him. He did not

mean to complain, however. Mr Elliot was better to look at than most

men, and he had no objection to being seen with him anywhere.”

Mr Elliot, and his friends in Marlborough Buildings, were talked of the

whole evening. “Colonel Wallis had been so impatient to be introduced

to them! and Mr Elliot so anxious that he should!” and there was a Mrs

Wallis, at present known only to them by description, as she was in

daily expectation of her confinement; but Mr Elliot spoke of her as “a

most charming woman, quite worthy of being known in Camden Place,” and

as soon as she recovered they were to be acquainted. Sir Walter thought

much of Mrs Wallis; she was said to be an excessively pretty woman,

beautiful. “He longed to see her. He hoped she might make some amends

for the many very plain faces he was continually passing in the

streets. The worst of Bath was the number of its plain women. He did

not mean to say that there were no pretty women, but the number of the

plain was out of all proportion. He had frequently observed, as he

walked, that one handsome face would be followed by thirty, or

five-and-thirty frights; and once, as he had stood in a shop on Bond

Street, he had counted eighty-seven women go by, one after another,

without there being a tolerable face among them. It had been a frosty

morning, to be sure, a sharp frost, which hardly one woman in a

thousand could stand the test of. But still, there certainly were a

dreadful multitude of ugly women in Bath; and as for the men! they were

infinitely worse. Such scarecrows as the streets were full of! It was

evident how little the women were used to the sight of anything

tolerable, by the effect which a man of decent appearance produced. He

had never walked anywhere arm-in-arm with Colonel Wallis (who was a

fine military figure, though sandy-haired) without observing that every

woman’s eye was upon him; every woman’s eye was sure to be upon Colonel

Wallis.” Modest Sir Walter! He was not allowed to escape, however. His

daughter and Mrs Clay united in hinting that Colonel Wallis’s companion

might have as good a figure as Colonel Wallis, and certainly was not

sandy-haired.

“How is Mary looking?” said Sir Walter, in the height of his good

humour. “The last time I saw her she had a red nose, but I hope that

may not happen every day.”

“Oh! no, that must have been quite accidental. In general she has been

in very good health and very good looks since Michaelmas.”

“If I thought it would not tempt her to go out in sharp winds, and grow

coarse, I would send her a new hat and pelisse.”

Anne was considering whether she should venture to suggest that a gown,

or a cap, would not be liable to any such misuse, when a knock at the

door suspended everything. “A knock at the door! and so late! It was

ten o’clock. Could it be Mr Elliot? They knew he was to dine in

Lansdown Crescent. It was possible that he might stop in his way home

to ask them how they did. They could think of no one else. Mrs Clay

decidedly thought it Mr Elliot’s knock.” Mrs Clay was right. With all

the state which a butler and foot-boy could give, Mr Elliot was ushered

into the room.

It was the same, the very same man, with no difference but of dress.

Anne drew a little back, while the others received his compliments, and

her sister his apologies for calling at so unusual an hour, but “he

could not be so near without wishing to know that neither she nor her

friend had taken cold the day before,” &c. &c.; which was all as

politely done, and as politely taken, as possible, but her part must

follow then. Sir Walter talked of his youngest daughter; “Mr Elliot

must give him leave to present him to his youngest daughter” (there was

no occasion for remembering Mary); and Anne, smiling and blushing, very

becomingly shewed to Mr Elliot the pretty features which he had by no

means forgotten, and instantly saw, with amusement at his little start

of surprise, that he had not been at all aware of who she was. He

looked completely astonished, but not more astonished than pleased; his

eyes brightened! and with the most perfect alacrity he welcomed the

relationship, alluded to the past, and entreated to be received as an

acquaintance already. He was quite as good-looking as he had appeared

at Lyme, his countenance improved by speaking, and his manners were so

exactly what they ought to be, so polished, so easy, so particularly

agreeable, that she could compare them in excellence to only one

person’s manners. They were not the same, but they were, perhaps,

equally good.

He sat down with them, and improved their conversation very much. There

could be no doubt of his being a sensible man. Ten minutes were enough

to certify that. His tone, his expressions, his choice of subject, his

knowing where to stop; it was all the operation of a sensible,

discerning mind. As soon as he could, he began to talk to her of Lyme,

wanting to compare opinions respecting the place, but especially

wanting to speak of the circumstance of their happening to be guests in

the same inn at the same time; to give his own route, understand

something of hers, and regret that he should have lost such an

opportunity of paying his respects to her. She gave him a short account

of her party and business at Lyme. His regret increased as he listened.

He had spent his whole solitary evening in the room adjoining theirs;

had heard voices, mirth continually; thought they must be a most

delightful set of people, longed to be with them, but certainly without

the smallest suspicion of his possessing the shadow of a right to

introduce himself. If he had but asked who the party were! The name of

Musgrove would have told him enough. “Well, it would serve to cure him

of an absurd practice of never asking a question at an inn, which he

had adopted, when quite a young man, on the principle of its being very

ungenteel to be curious.”

“The notions of a young man of one or two and twenty,” said he, “as to

what is necessary in manners to make him quite the thing, are more

absurd, I believe, than those of any other set of beings in the world.

The folly of the means they often employ is only to be equalled by the

folly of what they have in view.”

But he must not be addressing his reflections to Anne alone: he knew

it; he was soon diffused again among the others, and it was only at

intervals that he could return to Lyme.

His enquiries, however, produced at length an account of the scene she

had been engaged in there, soon after his leaving the place. Having

alluded to “an accident,” he must hear the whole. When he questioned,

Sir Walter and Elizabeth began to question also, but the difference in

their manner of doing it could not be unfelt. She could only compare Mr

Elliot to Lady Russell, in the wish of really comprehending what had

passed, and in the degree of concern for what she must have suffered in

witnessing it.

He staid an hour with them. The elegant little clock on the

mantel-piece had struck “eleven with its silver sounds,” and the

watchman was beginning to be heard at a distance telling the same tale,

before Mr Elliot or any of them seemed to feel that he had been there

long.

Anne could not have supposed it possible that her first evening in

Camden Place could have passed so well!

CHAPTER XVI.

There was one point which Anne, on returning to her family, would have

been more thankful to ascertain even than Mr Elliot’s being in love

with Elizabeth, which was, her father’s not being in love with Mrs

Clay; and she was very far from easy about it, when she had been at

home a few hours. On going down to breakfast the next morning, she

found there had just been a decent pretence on the lady’s side of

meaning to leave them. She could imagine Mrs Clay to have said, that

“now Miss Anne was come, she could not suppose herself at all wanted;”

for Elizabeth was replying in a sort of whisper, “That must not be any

reason, indeed. I assure you I feel it none. She is nothing to me,

compared with you;” and she was in full time to hear her father say,

“My dear madam, this must not be. As yet, you have seen nothing of

Bath. You have been here only to be useful. You must not run away from

us now. You must stay to be acquainted with Mrs Wallis, the beautiful

Mrs Wallis. To your fine mind, I well know the sight of beauty is a

real gratification.”

He spoke and looked so much in earnest, that Anne was not surprised to

see Mrs Clay stealing a glance at Elizabeth and herself. Her

countenance, perhaps, might express some watchfulness; but the praise

of the fine mind did not appear to excite a thought in her sister. The

lady could not but yield to such joint entreaties, and promise to stay.

In the course of the same morning, Anne and her father chancing to be

alone together, he began to compliment her on her improved looks; he

thought her “less thin in her person, in her cheeks; her skin, her

complexion, greatly improved; clearer, fresher. Had she been using any

thing in particular?” “No, nothing.” “Merely Gowland,” he supposed.

“No, nothing at all.” “Ha! he was surprised at that;” and added,

“certainly you cannot do better than to continue as you are; you cannot

be better than well; or I should recommend Gowland, the constant use of

Gowland, during the spring months. Mrs Clay has been using it at my

recommendation, and you see what it has done for her. You see how it

has carried away her freckles.”

If Elizabeth could but have heard this! Such personal praise might have

struck her, especially as it did not appear to Anne that the freckles

were at all lessened. But everything must take its chance. The evil of

a marriage would be much diminished, if Elizabeth were also to marry.

As for herself, she might always command a home with Lady Russell.

Lady Russell’s composed mind and polite manners were put to some trial

on this point, in her intercourse in Camden Place. The sight of Mrs

Clay in such favour, and of Anne so overlooked, was a perpetual

provocation to her there; and vexed her as much when she was away, as a

person in Bath who drinks the water, gets all the new publications, and

has a very large acquaintance, has time to be vexed.

As Mr Elliot became known to her, she grew more charitable, or more

indifferent, towards the others. His manners were an immediate

recommendation; and on conversing with him she found the solid so fully

supporting the superficial, that she was at first, as she told Anne,

almost ready to exclaim, “Can this be Mr Elliot?” and could not

seriously picture to herself a more agreeable or estimable man.

Everything united in him; good understanding, correct opinions,

knowledge of the world, and a warm heart. He had strong feelings of

family attachment and family honour, without pride or weakness; he

lived with the liberality of a man of fortune, without display; he

judged for himself in everything essential, without defying public

opinion in any point of worldly decorum. He was steady, observant,

moderate, candid; never run away with by spirits or by selfishness,

which fancied itself strong feeling; and yet, with a sensibility to

what was amiable and lovely, and a value for all the felicities of

domestic life, which characters of fancied enthusiasm and violent

agitation seldom really possess. She was sure that he had not been

happy in marriage. Colonel Wallis said it, and Lady Russell saw it; but

it had been no unhappiness to sour his mind, nor (she began pretty soon

to suspect) to prevent his thinking of a second choice. Her

satisfaction in Mr Elliot outweighed all the plague of Mrs Clay.

It was now some years since Anne had begun to learn that she and her

excellent friend could sometimes think differently; and it did not

surprise her, therefore, that Lady Russell should see nothing

suspicious or inconsistent, nothing to require more motives than

appeared, in Mr Elliot’s great desire of a reconciliation. In Lady

Russell’s view, it was perfectly natural that Mr Elliot, at a mature

time of life, should feel it a most desirable object, and what would

very generally recommend him among all sensible people, to be on good

terms with the head of his family; the simplest process in the world of

time upon a head naturally clear, and only erring in the heyday of

youth. Anne presumed, however, still to smile about it, and at last to

mention “Elizabeth.” Lady Russell listened, and looked, and made only

this cautious reply:—“Elizabeth! very well; time will explain.”

It was a reference to the future, which Anne, after a little

observation, felt she must submit to. She could determine nothing at

present. In that house Elizabeth must be first; and she was in the

habit of such general observance as “Miss Elliot,” that any

particularity of attention seemed almost impossible. Mr Elliot, too, it

must be remembered, had not been a widower seven months. A little delay

on his side might be very excusable. In fact, Anne could never see the

crape round his hat, without fearing that she was the inexcusable one,

in attributing to him such imaginations; for though his marriage had

not been very happy, still it had existed so many years that she could

not comprehend a very rapid recovery from the awful impression of its

being dissolved.

However it might end, he was without any question their pleasantest

acquaintance in Bath: she saw nobody equal to him; and it was a great

indulgence now and then to talk to him about Lyme, which he seemed to

have as lively a wish to see again, and to see more of, as herself.

They went through the particulars of their first meeting a great many

times. He gave her to understand that he had looked at her with some

earnestness. She knew it well; and she remembered another person’s look

also.

They did not always think alike. His value for rank and connexion she

perceived was greater than hers. It was not merely complaisance, it

must be a liking to the cause, which made him enter warmly into her

father and sister’s solicitudes on a subject which she thought unworthy

to excite them. The Bath paper one morning announced the arrival of the

Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and her daughter, the Honourable Miss

Carteret; and all the comfort of No. —, Camden Place, was swept away

for many days; for the Dalrymples (in Anne’s opinion, most

unfortunately) were cousins of the Elliots; and the agony was how to

introduce themselves properly.

Anne had never seen her father and sister before in contact with

nobility, and she must acknowledge herself disappointed. She had hoped

better things from their high ideas of their own situation in life, and

was reduced to form a wish which she had never foreseen; a wish that

they had more pride; for “our cousins Lady Dalrymple and Miss

Carteret;” “our cousins, the Dalrymples,” sounded in her ears all day

long.

Sir Walter had once been in company with the late viscount, but had

never seen any of the rest of the family; and the difficulties of the

case arose from there having been a suspension of all intercourse by

letters of ceremony, ever since the death of that said late viscount,

when, in consequence of a dangerous illness of Sir Walter’s at the same

time, there had been an unlucky omission at Kellynch. No letter of

condolence had been sent to Ireland. The neglect had been visited on

the head of the sinner; for when poor Lady Elliot died herself, no

letter of condolence was received at Kellynch, and, consequently, there

was but too much reason to apprehend that the Dalrymples considered the

relationship as closed. How to have this anxious business set to

rights, and be admitted as cousins again, was the question: and it was

a question which, in a more rational manner, neither Lady Russell nor

Mr Elliot thought unimportant. “Family connexions were always worth

preserving, good company always worth seeking; Lady Dalrymple had taken

a house, for three months, in Laura Place, and would be living in

style. She had been at Bath the year before, and Lady Russell had heard

her spoken of as a charming woman. It was very desirable that the

connexion should be renewed, if it could be done, without any

compromise of propriety on the side of the Elliots.”

Sir Walter, however, would choose his own means, and at last wrote a

very fine letter of ample explanation, regret, and entreaty, to his

right honourable cousin. Neither Lady Russell nor Mr Elliot could

admire the letter; but it did all that was wanted, in bringing three

lines of scrawl from the Dowager Viscountess. “She was very much

honoured, and should be happy in their acquaintance.” The toils of the

business were over, the sweets began. They visited in Laura Place, they

had the cards of Dowager Viscountess Dalrymple, and the Honourable Miss

Carteret, to be arranged wherever they might be most visible: and “Our

cousins in Laura Place,”—“Our cousin, Lady Dalrymple and Miss

Carteret,” were talked of to everybody.

Anne was ashamed. Had Lady Dalrymple and her daughter even been very

agreeable, she would still have been ashamed of the agitation they

created, but they were nothing. There was no superiority of manner,

accomplishment, or understanding. Lady Dalrymple had acquired the name

of “a charming woman,” because she had a smile and a civil answer for

everybody. Miss Carteret, with still less to say, was so plain and so

awkward, that she would never have been tolerated in Camden Place but

for her birth.

Lady Russell confessed she had expected something better; but yet “it

was an acquaintance worth having;” and when Anne ventured to speak her

opinion of them to Mr Elliot, he agreed to their being nothing in

themselves, but still maintained that, as a family connexion, as good

company, as those who would collect good company around them, they had

their value. Anne smiled and said,

“My idea of good company, Mr Elliot, is the company of clever,

well-informed people, who have a great deal of conversation; that is

what I call good company.”

“You are mistaken,” said he gently, “that is not good company; that is

the best. Good company requires only birth, education, and manners, and

with regard to education is not very nice. Birth and good manners are

essential; but a little learning is by no means a dangerous thing in

good company; on the contrary, it will do very well. My cousin Anne

shakes her head. She is not satisfied. She is fastidious. My dear

cousin” (sitting down by her), “you have a better right to be

fastidious than almost any other woman I know; but will it answer? Will

it make you happy? Will it not be wiser to accept the society of those

good ladies in Laura Place, and enjoy all the advantages of the

connexion as far as possible? You may depend upon it, that they will

move in the first set in Bath this winter, and as rank is rank, your

being known to be related to them will have its use in fixing your

family (our family let me say) in that degree of consideration which we

must all wish for.”

“Yes,” sighed Anne, “we shall, indeed, be known to be related to them!”

then recollecting herself, and not wishing to be answered, she added,

“I certainly do think there has been by far too much trouble taken to

procure the acquaintance. I suppose” (smiling) “I have more pride than

any of you; but I confess it does vex me, that we should be so

solicitous to have the relationship acknowledged, which we may be very

sure is a matter of perfect indifference to them.”

“Pardon me, dear cousin, you are unjust in your own claims. In London,

perhaps, in your present quiet style of living, it might be as you say:

but in Bath; Sir Walter Elliot and his family will always be worth

knowing: always acceptable as acquaintance.”

“Well,” said Anne, “I certainly am proud, too proud to enjoy a welcome

which depends so entirely upon place.”

“I love your indignation,” said he; “it is very natural. But here you

are in Bath, and the object is to be established here with all the

credit and dignity which ought to belong to Sir Walter Elliot. You talk

of being proud; I am called proud, I know, and I shall not wish to

believe myself otherwise; for our pride, if investigated, would have

the same object, I have no doubt, though the kind may seem a little

different. In one point, I am sure, my dear cousin,” (he continued,

speaking lower, though there was no one else in the room) “in one

point, I am sure, we must feel alike. We must feel that every addition

to your father’s society, among his equals or superiors, may be of use

in diverting his thoughts from those who are beneath him.”

He looked, as he spoke, to the seat which Mrs Clay had been lately

occupying: a sufficient explanation of what he particularly meant; and

though Anne could not believe in their having the same sort of pride,

she was pleased with him for not liking Mrs Clay; and her conscience

admitted that his wishing to promote her father’s getting great

acquaintance was more than excusable in the view of defeating her.

CHAPTER XVII.

While Sir Walter and Elizabeth were assiduously pushing their good

fortune in Laura Place, Anne was renewing an acquaintance of a very

different description.

She had called on her former governess, and had heard from her of there

being an old schoolfellow in Bath, who had the two strong claims on

her attention of past kindness and present suffering. Miss Hamilton,

now Mrs Smith, had shewn her kindness in one of those periods of her

life when it had been most valuable. Anne had gone unhappy to school,

grieving for the loss of a mother whom she had dearly loved, feeling

her separation from home, and suffering as a girl of fourteen, of

strong sensibility and not high spirits, must suffer at such a time;

and Miss Hamilton, three years older than herself, but still from the

want of near relations and a settled home, remaining another year at

school, had been useful and good to her in a way which had considerably

lessened her misery, and could never be remembered with indifference.

Miss Hamilton had left school, had married not long afterwards, was

said to have married a man of fortune, and this was all that Anne had

known of her, till now that their governess’s account brought her

situation forward in a more decided but very different form.

She was a widow and poor. Her husband had been extravagant; and at his

death, about two years before, had left his affairs dreadfully

involved. She had had difficulties of every sort to contend with, and

in addition to these distresses had been afflicted with a severe

rheumatic fever, which, finally settling in her legs, had made her for

the present a cripple. She had come to Bath on that account, and was

now in lodgings near the hot baths, living in a very humble way, unable

even to afford herself the comfort of a servant, and of course almost

excluded from society.

Their mutual friend answered for the satisfaction which a visit from

Miss Elliot would give Mrs Smith, and Anne therefore lost no time in

going. She mentioned nothing of what she had heard, or what she

intended, at home. It would excite no proper interest there. She only

consulted Lady Russell, who entered thoroughly into her sentiments, and

was most happy to convey her as near to Mrs Smith’s lodgings in

Westgate Buildings, as Anne chose to be taken.

The visit was paid, their acquaintance re-established, their interest

in each other more than re-kindled. The first ten minutes had its

awkwardness and its emotion. Twelve years were gone since they had

parted, and each presented a somewhat different person from what the

other had imagined. Twelve years had changed Anne from the blooming,

silent, unformed girl of fifteen, to the elegant little woman of

seven-and-twenty, with every beauty except bloom, and with manners as

consciously right as they were invariably gentle; and twelve years had

transformed the fine-looking, well-grown Miss Hamilton, in all the glow

of health and confidence of superiority, into a poor, infirm, helpless

widow, receiving the visit of her former protegee as a favour; but all

that was uncomfortable in the meeting had soon passed away, and left

only the interesting charm of remembering former partialities and

talking over old times.

Anne found in Mrs Smith the good sense and agreeable manners which she

had almost ventured to depend on, and a disposition to converse and be

cheerful beyond her expectation. Neither the dissipations of the

past—and she had lived very much in the world—nor the restrictions of

the present, neither sickness nor sorrow seemed to have closed her

heart or ruined her spirits.

In the course of a second visit she talked with great openness, and

Anne’s astonishment increased. She could scarcely imagine a more

cheerless situation in itself than Mrs Smith’s. She had been very fond

of her husband: she had buried him. She had been used to affluence: it

was gone. She had no child to connect her with life and happiness

again, no relations to assist in the arrangement of perplexed affairs,

no health to make all the rest supportable. Her accommodations were

limited to a noisy parlour, and a dark bedroom behind, with no

possibility of moving from one to the other without assistance, which

there was only one servant in the house to afford, and she never

quitted the house but to be conveyed into the warm bath. Yet, in spite

of all this, Anne had reason to believe that she had moments only of

languor and depression, to hours of occupation and enjoyment. How could

it be? She watched, observed, reflected, and finally determined that

this was not a case of fortitude or of resignation only. A submissive

spirit might be patient, a strong understanding would supply

resolution, but here was something more; here was that elasticity of

mind, that disposition to be comforted, that power of turning readily

from evil to good, and of finding employment which carried her out of

herself, which was from nature alone. It was the choicest gift of

Heaven; and Anne viewed her friend as one of those instances in which,

by a merciful appointment, it seems designed to counterbalance almost

every other want.

There had been a time, Mrs Smith told her, when her spirits had nearly

failed. She could not call herself an invalid now, compared with her

state on first reaching Bath. Then she had, indeed, been a pitiable

object; for she had caught cold on the journey, and had hardly taken

possession of her lodgings before she was again confined to her bed and

suffering under severe and constant pain; and all this among strangers,

with the absolute necessity of having a regular nurse, and finances at

that moment particularly unfit to meet any extraordinary expense. She

had weathered it, however, and could truly say that it had done her

good. It had increased her comforts by making her feel herself to be in

good hands. She had seen too much of the world, to expect sudden or

disinterested attachment anywhere, but her illness had proved to her

that her landlady had a character to preserve, and would not use her

ill; and she had been particularly fortunate in her nurse, as a sister

of her landlady, a nurse by profession, and who had always a home in

that house when unemployed, chanced to be at liberty just in time to

attend her. “And she,” said Mrs Smith, “besides nursing me most

admirably, has really proved an invaluable acquaintance. As soon as I

could use my hands she taught me to knit, which has been a great

amusement; and she put me in the way of making these little

thread-cases, pin-cushions and card-racks, which you always find me so

busy about, and which supply me with the means of doing a little good

to one or two very poor families in this neighbourhood. She had a large

acquaintance, of course professionally, among those who can afford to

buy, and she disposes of my merchandise. She always takes the right

time for applying. Everybody’s heart is open, you know, when they have

recently escaped from severe pain, or are recovering the blessing of

health, and Nurse Rooke thoroughly understands when to speak. She is a

shrewd, intelligent, sensible woman. Hers is a line for seeing human

nature; and she has a fund of good sense and observation, which, as a

companion, make her infinitely superior to thousands of those who

having only received ‘the best education in the world,’ know nothing

worth attending to. Call it gossip, if you will, but when Nurse Rooke

has half an hour’s leisure to bestow on me, she is sure to have

something to relate that is entertaining and profitable: something that

makes one know one’s species better. One likes to hear what is going

on, to be \_au fait\_ as to the newest modes of being trifling and silly.

To me, who live so much alone, her conversation, I assure you, is a

treat.”

Anne, far from wishing to cavil at the pleasure, replied, “I can easily

believe it. Women of that class have great opportunities, and if they

are intelligent may be well worth listening to. Such varieties of human

nature as they are in the habit of witnessing! And it is not merely in

its follies, that they are well read; for they see it occasionally

under every circumstance that can be most interesting or affecting.

What instances must pass before them of ardent, disinterested,

self-denying attachment, of heroism, fortitude, patience, resignation:

of all the conflicts and all the sacrifices that ennoble us most. A

sick chamber may often furnish the worth of volumes.”

“Yes,” said Mrs Smith more doubtingly, “sometimes it may, though I fear

its lessons are not often in the elevated style you describe. Here and

there, human nature may be great in times of trial; but generally

speaking, it is its weakness and not its strength that appears in a

sick chamber: it is selfishness and impatience rather than generosity

and fortitude, that one hears of. There is so little real friendship in

the world! and unfortunately” (speaking low and tremulously) “there are

so many who forget to think seriously till it is almost too late.”

Anne saw the misery of such feelings. The husband had not been what he

ought, and the wife had been led among that part of mankind which made

her think worse of the world than she hoped it deserved. It was but a

passing emotion however with Mrs Smith; she shook it off, and soon

added in a different tone—

“I do not suppose the situation my friend Mrs Rooke is in at present,

will furnish much either to interest or edify me. She is only nursing

Mrs Wallis of Marlborough Buildings; a mere pretty, silly, expensive,

fashionable woman, I believe; and of course will have nothing to report

but of lace and finery. I mean to make my profit of Mrs Wallis,

however. She has plenty of money, and I intend she shall buy all the

high-priced things I have in hand now.”

Anne had called several times on her friend, before the existence of

such a person was known in Camden Place. At last, it became necessary

to speak of her. Sir Walter, Elizabeth and Mrs Clay, returned one

morning from Laura Place, with a sudden invitation from Lady Dalrymple

for the same evening, and Anne was already engaged, to spend that

evening in Westgate Buildings. She was not sorry for the excuse. They

were only asked, she was sure, because Lady Dalrymple being kept at

home by a bad cold, was glad to make use of the relationship which had

been so pressed on her; and she declined on her own account with great

alacrity—“She was engaged to spend the evening with an old

schoolfellow.” They were not much interested in anything relative to

Anne; but still there were questions enough asked, to make it

understood what this old schoolfellow was; and Elizabeth was

disdainful, and Sir Walter severe.

“Westgate Buildings!” said he, “and who is Miss Anne Elliot to be

visiting in Westgate Buildings? A Mrs Smith. A widow Mrs Smith; and who

was her husband? One of five thousand Mr Smiths whose names are to be

met with everywhere. And what is her attraction? That she is old and

sickly. Upon my word, Miss Anne Elliot, you have the most extraordinary

taste! Everything that revolts other people, low company, paltry rooms,

foul air, disgusting associations are inviting to you. But surely you

may put off this old lady till to-morrow: she is not so near her end, I

presume, but that she may hope to see another day. What is her age?

Forty?”

“No, sir, she is not one-and-thirty; but I do not think I can put off

my engagement, because it is the only evening for some time which will

at once suit her and myself. She goes into the warm bath to-morrow, and

for the rest of the week, you know, we are engaged.”

“But what does Lady Russell think of this acquaintance?” asked

Elizabeth.

“She sees nothing to blame in it,” replied Anne; “on the contrary, she

approves it, and has generally taken me when I have called on Mrs

Smith.”

“Westgate Buildings must have been rather surprised by the appearance

of a carriage drawn up near its pavement,” observed Sir Walter. “Sir

Henry Russell’s widow, indeed, has no honours to distinguish her arms,

but still it is a handsome equipage, and no doubt is well known to

convey a Miss Elliot. A widow Mrs Smith lodging in Westgate Buildings!

A poor widow barely able to live, between thirty and forty; a mere Mrs

Smith, an every-day Mrs Smith, of all people and all names in the

world, to be the chosen friend of Miss Anne Elliot, and to be preferred

by her to her own family connections among the nobility of England and

Ireland! Mrs Smith! Such a name!”

Mrs Clay, who had been present while all this passed, now thought it

advisable to leave the room, and Anne could have said much, and did

long to say a little in defence of \_her\_ friend’s not very dissimilar

claims to theirs, but her sense of personal respect to her father

prevented her. She made no reply. She left it to himself to recollect,

that Mrs Smith was not the only widow in Bath between thirty and forty,

with little to live on, and no surname of dignity.

Anne kept her appointment; the others kept theirs, and of course she

heard the next morning that they had had a delightful evening. She had

been the only one of the set absent, for Sir Walter and Elizabeth had

not only been quite at her ladyship’s service themselves, but had

actually been happy to be employed by her in collecting others, and had

been at the trouble of inviting both Lady Russell and Mr Elliot; and Mr

Elliot had made a point of leaving Colonel Wallis early, and Lady

Russell had fresh arranged all her evening engagements in order to wait

on her. Anne had the whole history of all that such an evening could

supply from Lady Russell. To her, its greatest interest must be, in

having been very much talked of between her friend and Mr Elliot; in

having been wished for, regretted, and at the same time honoured for

staying away in such a cause. Her kind, compassionate visits to this

old schoolfellow, sick and reduced, seemed to have quite delighted Mr

Elliot. He thought her a most extraordinary young woman; in her temper,

manners, mind, a model of female excellence. He could meet even Lady

Russell in a discussion of her merits; and Anne could not be given to

understand so much by her friend, could not know herself to be so

highly rated by a sensible man, without many of those agreeable

sensations which her friend meant to create.

Lady Russell was now perfectly decided in her opinion of Mr Elliot. She

was as much convinced of his meaning to gain Anne in time as of his

deserving her, and was beginning to calculate the number of weeks which

would free him from all the remaining restraints of widowhood, and

leave him at liberty to exert his most open powers of pleasing. She

would not speak to Anne with half the certainty she felt on the

subject, she would venture on little more than hints of what might be

hereafter, of a possible attachment on his side, of the desirableness

of the alliance, supposing such attachment to be real and returned.

Anne heard her, and made no violent exclamations; she only smiled,

blushed, and gently shook her head.

“I am no match-maker, as you well know,” said Lady Russell, “being much

too well aware of the uncertainty of all human events and calculations.

I only mean that if Mr Elliot should some time hence pay his addresses

to you, and if you should be disposed to accept him, I think there

would be every possibility of your being happy together. A most

suitable connection everybody must consider it, but I think it might be

a very happy one.”

“Mr Elliot is an exceedingly agreeable man, and in many respects I

think highly of him,” said Anne; “but we should not suit.”

Lady Russell let this pass, and only said in rejoinder, “I own that to

be able to regard you as the future mistress of Kellynch, the future

Lady Elliot, to look forward and see you occupying your dear mother’s

place, succeeding to all her rights, and all her popularity, as well as

to all her virtues, would be the highest possible gratification to me.

You are your mother’s self in countenance and disposition; and if I

might be allowed to fancy you such as she was, in situation and name,

and home, presiding and blessing in the same spot, and only superior to

her in being more highly valued! My dearest Anne, it would give me more

delight than is often felt at my time of life!”

Anne was obliged to turn away, to rise, to walk to a distant table,

and, leaning there in pretended employment, try to subdue the feelings

this picture excited. For a few moments her imagination and her heart

were bewitched. The idea of becoming what her mother had been; of

having the precious name of “Lady Elliot” first revived in herself; of

being restored to Kellynch, calling it her home again, her home for

ever, was a charm which she could not immediately resist. Lady Russell

said not another word, willing to leave the matter to its own

operation; and believing that, could Mr Elliot at that moment with

propriety have spoken for himself!—she believed, in short, what Anne

did not believe. The same image of Mr Elliot speaking for himself

brought Anne to composure again. The charm of Kellynch and of “Lady

Elliot” all faded away. She never could accept him. And it was not only

that her feelings were still adverse to any man save one; her

judgement, on a serious consideration of the possibilities of such a

case, was against Mr Elliot.

Though they had now been acquainted a month, she could not be satisfied

that she really knew his character. That he was a sensible man, an

agreeable man, that he talked well, professed good opinions, seemed to

judge properly and as a man of principle, this was all clear enough. He

certainly knew what was right, nor could she fix on any one article of

moral duty evidently transgressed; but yet she would have been afraid

to answer for his conduct. She distrusted the past, if not the present.

The names which occasionally dropt of former associates, the allusions

to former practices and pursuits, suggested suspicions not favourable

of what he had been. She saw that there had been bad habits; that

Sunday travelling had been a common thing; that there had been a period

of his life (and probably not a short one) when he had been, at least,

careless in all serious matters; and, though he might now think very

differently, who could answer for the true sentiments of a clever,

cautious man, grown old enough to appreciate a fair character? How

could it ever be ascertained that his mind was truly cleansed?

Mr Elliot was rational, discreet, polished, but he was not open. There

was never any burst of feeling, any warmth of indignation or delight,

at the evil or good of others. This, to Anne, was a decided

imperfection. Her early impressions were incurable. She prized the

frank, the open-hearted, the eager character beyond all others. Warmth

and enthusiasm did captivate her still. She felt that she could so much

more depend upon the sincerity of those who sometimes looked or said a

careless or a hasty thing, than of those whose presence of mind never

varied, whose tongue never slipped.

Mr Elliot was too generally agreeable. Various as were the tempers in

her father’s house, he pleased them all. He endured too well, stood too

well with every body. He had spoken to her with some degree of openness

of Mrs Clay; had appeared completely to see what Mrs Clay was about,

and to hold her in contempt; and yet Mrs Clay found him as agreeable as

any body.

Lady Russell saw either less or more than her young friend, for she saw

nothing to excite distrust. She could not imagine a man more exactly

what he ought to be than Mr Elliot; nor did she ever enjoy a sweeter

feeling than the hope of seeing him receive the hand of her beloved

Anne in Kellynch church, in the course of the following autumn.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was the beginning of February; and Anne, having been a month in

Bath, was growing very eager for news from Uppercross and Lyme. She

wanted to hear much more than Mary had communicated. It was three weeks

since she had heard at all. She only knew that Henrietta was at home

again; and that Louisa, though considered to be recovering fast, was

still in Lyme; and she was thinking of them all very intently one

evening, when a thicker letter than usual from Mary was delivered to

her; and, to quicken the pleasure and surprise, with Admiral and Mrs

Croft’s compliments.

The Crofts must be in Bath! A circumstance to interest her. They were

people whom her heart turned to very naturally.

“What is this?” cried Sir Walter. “The Crofts have arrived in Bath? The

Crofts who rent Kellynch? What have they brought you?”

“A letter from Uppercross Cottage, Sir.”

“Oh! those letters are convenient passports. They secure an

introduction. I should have visited Admiral Croft, however, at any

rate. I know what is due to my tenant.”

Anne could listen no longer; she could not even have told how the poor

Admiral’s complexion escaped; her letter engrossed her. It had been

begun several days back.

“February 1st.

“MY DEAR ANNE,

I make no apology for my silence, because I know how little people

think of letters in such a place as Bath. You must be a great deal too

happy to care for Uppercross, which, as you well know, affords little

to write about. We have had a very dull Christmas; Mr and Mrs Musgrove

have not had one dinner party all the holidays. I do not reckon the

Hayters as anybody. The holidays, however, are over at last: I believe

no children ever had such long ones. I am sure I had not. The house was

cleared yesterday, except of the little Harvilles; but you will be

surprised to hear they have never gone home. Mrs Harville must be an

odd mother to part with them so long. I do not understand it. They are

not at all nice children, in my opinion; but Mrs Musgrove seems to like

them quite as well, if not better, than her grandchildren. What

dreadful weather we have had! It may not be felt in Bath, with your

nice pavements; but in the country it is of some consequence. I have

not had a creature call on me since the second week in January, except

Charles Hayter, who had been calling much oftener than was welcome.

Between ourselves, I think it a great pity Henrietta did not remain at

Lyme as long as Louisa; it would have kept her a little out of his way.

The carriage is gone to-day, to bring Louisa and the Harvilles

to-morrow. We are not asked to dine with them, however, till the day

after, Mrs Musgrove is so afraid of her being fatigued by the journey,

which is not very likely, considering the care that will be taken of

her; and it would be much more convenient to me to dine there

to-morrow. I am glad you find Mr Elliot so agreeable, and wish I could

be acquainted with him too; but I have my usual luck: I am always out

of the way when any thing desirable is going on; always the last of my

family to be noticed. What an immense time Mrs Clay has been staying

with Elizabeth! Does she never mean to go away? But perhaps if she were

to leave the room vacant, we might not be invited. Let me know what you

think of this. I do not expect my children to be asked, you know. I can

leave them at the Great House very well, for a month or six weeks. I

have this moment heard that the Crofts are going to Bath almost

immediately; they think the Admiral gouty. Charles heard it quite by

chance; they have not had the civility to give me any notice, or of

offering to take anything. I do not think they improve at all as

neighbours. We see nothing of them, and this is really an instance of

gross inattention. Charles joins me in love, and everything proper.

Yours affectionately,

“MARY M——.

“I am sorry to say that I am very far from well; and Jemima has just

told me that the butcher says there is a bad sore-throat very much

about. I dare say I shall catch it; and my sore-throats, you know, are

always worse than anybody’s.”

So ended the first part, which had been afterwards put into an

envelope, containing nearly as much more.

“I kept my letter open, that I might send you word how Louisa bore her

journey, and now I am extremely glad I did, having a great deal to add.

In the first place, I had a note from Mrs Croft yesterday, offering to

convey anything to you; a very kind, friendly note indeed, addressed to

me, just as it ought; I shall therefore be able to make my letter as

long as I like. The Admiral does not seem very ill, and I sincerely

hope Bath will do him all the good he wants. I shall be truly glad to

have them back again. Our neighbourhood cannot spare such a pleasant

family. But now for Louisa. I have something to communicate that will

astonish you not a little. She and the Harvilles came on Tuesday very

safely, and in the evening we went to ask her how she did, when we were

rather surprised not to find Captain Benwick of the party, for he had

been invited as well as the Harvilles; and what do you think was the

reason? Neither more nor less than his being in love with Louisa, and

not choosing to venture to Uppercross till he had had an answer from Mr

Musgrove; for it was all settled between him and her before she came

away, and he had written to her father by Captain Harville. True, upon

my honour! Are not you astonished? I shall be surprised at least if you

ever received a hint of it, for I never did. Mrs Musgrove protests

solemnly that she knew nothing of the matter. We are all very well

pleased, however, for though it is not equal to her marrying Captain

Wentworth, it is infinitely better than Charles Hayter; and Mr Musgrove

has written his consent, and Captain Benwick is expected to-day. Mrs

Harville says her husband feels a good deal on his poor sister’s

account; but, however, Louisa is a great favourite with both. Indeed,

Mrs Harville and I quite agree that we love her the better for having

nursed her. Charles wonders what Captain Wentworth will say; but if you

remember, I never thought him attached to Louisa; I never could see

anything of it. And this is the end, you see, of Captain Benwick’s

being supposed to be an admirer of yours. How Charles could take such a

thing into his head was always incomprehensible to me. I hope he will

be more agreeable now. Certainly not a great match for Louisa Musgrove,

but a million times better than marrying among the Hayters.”

Mary need not have feared her sister’s being in any degree prepared for

the news. She had never in her life been more astonished. Captain

Benwick and Louisa Musgrove! It was almost too wonderful for belief,

and it was with the greatest effort that she could remain in the room,

preserve an air of calmness, and answer the common questions of the

moment. Happily for her, they were not many. Sir Walter wanted to know

whether the Crofts travelled with four horses, and whether they were

likely to be situated in such a part of Bath as it might suit Miss

Elliot and himself to visit in; but had little curiosity beyond.

“How is Mary?” said Elizabeth; and without waiting for an answer, “And

pray what brings the Crofts to Bath?”

“They come on the Admiral’s account. He is thought to be gouty.”

“Gout and decrepitude!” said Sir Walter. “Poor old gentleman.”

“Have they any acquaintance here?” asked Elizabeth.

“I do not know; but I can hardly suppose that, at Admiral Croft’s time

of life, and in his profession, he should not have many acquaintance in

such a place as this.”

“I suspect,” said Sir Walter coolly, “that Admiral Croft will be best

known in Bath as the renter of Kellynch Hall. Elizabeth, may we venture

to present him and his wife in Laura Place?”

“Oh, no! I think not. Situated as we are with Lady Dalrymple, cousins,

we ought to be very careful not to embarrass her with acquaintance she

might not approve. If we were not related, it would not signify; but as

cousins, she would feel scrupulous as to any proposal of ours. We had

better leave the Crofts to find their own level. There are several

odd-looking men walking about here, who, I am told, are sailors. The

Crofts will associate with them.”

This was Sir Walter and Elizabeth’s share of interest in the letter;

when Mrs Clay had paid her tribute of more decent attention, in an

enquiry after Mrs Charles Musgrove, and her fine little boys, Anne was

at liberty.

In her own room, she tried to comprehend it. Well might Charles wonder

how Captain Wentworth would feel! Perhaps he had quitted the field, had

given Louisa up, had ceased to love, had found he did not love her. She

could not endure the idea of treachery or levity, or anything akin to

ill usage between him and his friend. She could not endure that such a

friendship as theirs should be severed unfairly.

Captain Benwick and Louisa Musgrove! The high-spirited, joyous-talking

Louisa Musgrove, and the dejected, thinking, feeling, reading, Captain

Benwick, seemed each of them everything that would not suit the other.

Their minds most dissimilar! Where could have been the attraction? The

answer soon presented itself. It had been in situation. They had been

thrown together several weeks; they had been living in the same small

family party: since Henrietta’s coming away, they must have been

depending almost entirely on each other, and Louisa, just recovering

from illness, had been in an interesting state, and Captain Benwick was

not inconsolable. That was a point which Anne had not been able to

avoid suspecting before; and instead of drawing the same conclusion as

Mary, from the present course of events, they served only to confirm

the idea of his having felt some dawning of tenderness toward herself.

She did not mean, however, to derive much more from it to gratify her

vanity, than Mary might have allowed. She was persuaded that any

tolerably pleasing young woman who had listened and seemed to feel for

him would have received the same compliment. He had an affectionate

heart. He must love somebody.

She saw no reason against their being happy. Louisa had fine naval

fervour to begin with, and they would soon grow more alike. He would

gain cheerfulness, and she would learn to be an enthusiast for Scott

and Lord Byron; nay, that was probably learnt already; of course they

had fallen in love over poetry. The idea of Louisa Musgrove turned into

a person of literary taste, and sentimental reflection was amusing, but

she had no doubt of its being so. The day at Lyme, the fall from the

Cobb, might influence her health, her nerves, her courage, her

character to the end of her life, as thoroughly as it appeared to have

influenced her fate.

The conclusion of the whole was, that if the woman who had been

sensible of Captain Wentworth’s merits could be allowed to prefer

another man, there was nothing in the engagement to excite lasting

wonder; and if Captain Wentworth lost no friend by it, certainly

nothing to be regretted. No, it was not regret which made Anne’s heart

beat in spite of herself, and brought the colour into her cheeks when

she thought of Captain Wentworth unshackled and free. She had some

feelings which she was ashamed to investigate. They were too much like

joy, senseless joy!

She longed to see the Crofts; but when the meeting took place, it was

evident that no rumour of the news had yet reached them. The visit of

ceremony was paid and returned; and Louisa Musgrove was mentioned, and

Captain Benwick, too, without even half a smile.

The Crofts had placed themselves in lodgings in Gay Street, perfectly

to Sir Walter’s satisfaction. He was not at all ashamed of the

acquaintance, and did, in fact, think and talk a great deal more about

the Admiral, than the Admiral ever thought or talked about him.

The Crofts knew quite as many people in Bath as they wished for, and

considered their intercourse with the Elliots as a mere matter of form,

and not in the least likely to afford them any pleasure. They brought

with them their country habit of being almost always together. He was

ordered to walk to keep off the gout, and Mrs Croft seemed to go shares

with him in everything, and to walk for her life to do him good. Anne

saw them wherever she went. Lady Russell took her out in her carriage

almost every morning, and she never failed to think of them, and never

failed to see them. Knowing their feelings as she did, it was a most

attractive picture of happiness to her. She always watched them as long

as she could, delighted to fancy she understood what they might be

talking of, as they walked along in happy independence, or equally

delighted to see the Admiral’s hearty shake of the hand when he

encountered an old friend, and observe their eagerness of conversation

when occasionally forming into a little knot of the navy, Mrs Croft

looking as intelligent and keen as any of the officers around her.

Anne was too much engaged with Lady Russell to be often walking

herself; but it so happened that one morning, about a week or ten days

after the Croft’s arrival, it suited her best to leave her friend, or

her friend’s carriage, in the lower part of the town, and return alone

to Camden Place, and in walking up Milsom Street she had the good

fortune to meet with the Admiral. He was standing by himself at a

printshop window, with his hands behind him, in earnest contemplation

of some print, and she not only might have passed him unseen, but was

obliged to touch as well as address him before she could catch his

notice. When he did perceive and acknowledge her, however, it was done

with all his usual frankness and good humour. “Ha! is it you? Thank

you, thank you. This is treating me like a friend. Here I am, you see,

staring at a picture. I can never get by this shop without stopping.

But what a thing here is, by way of a boat! Do look at it. Did you ever

see the like? What queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think

that anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old

cockleshell as that? And yet here are two gentlemen stuck up in it

mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and

mountains, as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they

certainly must be. I wonder where that boat was built!” (laughing

heartily); “I would not venture over a horsepond in it. Well,” (turning

away), “now, where are you bound? Can I go anywhere for you, or with

you? Can I be of any use?”

“None, I thank you, unless you will give me the pleasure of your

company the little way our road lies together. I am going home.”

“That I will, with all my heart, and farther, too. Yes, yes we will

have a snug walk together, and I have something to tell you as we go

along. There, take my arm; that’s right; I do not feel comfortable if I

have not a woman there. Lord! what a boat it is!” taking a last look at

the picture, as they began to be in motion.

“Did you say that you had something to tell me, sir?”

“Yes, I have, presently. But here comes a friend, Captain Brigden; I

shall only say, ‘How d’ye do?’ as we pass, however. I shall not stop.

‘How d’ye do?’ Brigden stares to see anybody with me but my wife. She,

poor soul, is tied by the leg. She has a blister on one of her heels,

as large as a three-shilling piece. If you look across the street, you

will see Admiral Brand coming down and his brother. Shabby fellows,

both of them! I am glad they are not on this side of the way. Sophy

cannot bear them. They played me a pitiful trick once: got away with

some of my best men. I will tell you the whole story another time.

There comes old Sir Archibald Drew and his grandson. Look, he sees us;

he kisses his hand to you; he takes you for my wife. Ah! the peace has

come too soon for that younker. Poor old Sir Archibald! How do you like

Bath, Miss Elliot? It suits us very well. We are always meeting with

some old friend or other; the streets full of them every morning; sure

to have plenty of chat; and then we get away from them all, and shut

ourselves in our lodgings, and draw in our chairs, and are as snug as

if we were at Kellynch, ay, or as we used to be even at North Yarmouth

and Deal. We do not like our lodgings here the worse, I can tell you,

for putting us in mind of those we first had at North Yarmouth. The

wind blows through one of the cupboards just in the same way.”

When they were got a little farther, Anne ventured to press again for

what he had to communicate. She hoped when clear of Milsom Street to

have her curiosity gratified; but she was still obliged to wait, for

the Admiral had made up his mind not to begin till they had gained the

greater space and quiet of Belmont; and as she was not really Mrs

Croft, she must let him have his own way. As soon as they were fairly

ascending Belmont, he began—

“Well, now you shall hear something that will surprise you. But first

of all, you must tell me the name of the young lady I am going to talk

about. That young lady, you know, that we have all been so concerned

for. The Miss Musgrove, that all this has been happening to. Her

Christian name: I always forget her Christian name.”

Anne had been ashamed to appear to comprehend so soon as she really

did; but now she could safely suggest the name of “Louisa.”

“Ay, ay, Miss Louisa Musgrove, that is the name. I wish young ladies

had not such a number of fine Christian names. I should never be out if

they were all Sophys, or something of that sort. Well, this Miss

Louisa, we all thought, you know, was to marry Frederick. He was

courting her week after week. The only wonder was, what they could be

waiting for, till the business at Lyme came; then, indeed, it was clear

enough that they must wait till her brain was set to right. But even

then there was something odd in their way of going on. Instead of

staying at Lyme, he went off to Plymouth, and then he went off to see

Edward. When we came back from Minehead he was gone down to Edward’s,

and there he has been ever since. We have seen nothing of him since

November. Even Sophy could not understand it. But now, the matter has

taken the strangest turn of all; for this young lady, the same Miss

Musgrove, instead of being to marry Frederick, is to marry James

Benwick. You know James Benwick.”

“A little. I am a little acquainted with Captain Benwick.”

“Well, she is to marry him. Nay, most likely they are married already,

for I do not know what they should wait for.”

“I thought Captain Benwick a very pleasing young man,” said Anne, “and

I understand that he bears an excellent character.”

“Oh! yes, yes, there is not a word to be said against James Benwick. He

is only a commander, it is true, made last summer, and these are bad

times for getting on, but he has not another fault that I know of. An

excellent, good-hearted fellow, I assure you; a very active, zealous

officer too, which is more than you would think for, perhaps, for that

soft sort of manner does not do him justice.”

“Indeed you are mistaken there, sir; I should never augur want of

spirit from Captain Benwick’s manners. I thought them particularly

pleasing, and I will answer for it, they would generally please.”

“Well, well, ladies are the best judges; but James Benwick is rather

too piano for me; and though very likely it is all our partiality,

Sophy and I cannot help thinking Frederick’s manners better than his.

There is something about Frederick more to our taste.”

Anne was caught. She had only meant to oppose the too common idea of

spirit and gentleness being incompatible with each other, not at all to

represent Captain Benwick’s manners as the very best that could

possibly be; and, after a little hesitation, she was beginning to say,

“I was not entering into any comparison of the two friends,” but the

Admiral interrupted her with—

“And the thing is certainly true. It is not a mere bit of gossip. We

have it from Frederick himself. His sister had a letter from him

yesterday, in which he tells us of it, and he had just had it in a

letter from Harville, written upon the spot, from Uppercross. I fancy

they are all at Uppercross.”

This was an opportunity which Anne could not resist; she said,

therefore, “I hope, Admiral, I hope there is nothing in the style of

Captain Wentworth’s letter to make you and Mrs Croft particularly

uneasy. It did seem, last autumn, as if there were an attachment

between him and Louisa Musgrove; but I hope it may be understood to

have worn out on each side equally, and without violence. I hope his

letter does not breathe the spirit of an ill-used man.”

“Not at all, not at all; there is not an oath or a murmur from

beginning to end.”

Anne looked down to hide her smile.

“No, no; Frederick is not a man to whine and complain; he has too much

spirit for that. If the girl likes another man better, it is very fit

she should have him.”

“Certainly. But what I mean is, that I hope there is nothing in Captain

Wentworth’s manner of writing to make you suppose he thinks himself

ill-used by his friend, which might appear, you know, without its being

absolutely said. I should be very sorry that such a friendship as has

subsisted between him and Captain Benwick should be destroyed, or even

wounded, by a circumstance of this sort.”

“Yes, yes, I understand you. But there is nothing at all of that nature

in the letter. He does not give the least fling at Benwick; does not so

much as say, ‘I wonder at it, I have a reason of my own for wondering

at it.’ No, you would not guess, from his way of writing, that he had

ever thought of this Miss (what’s her name?) for himself. He very

handsomely hopes they will be happy together; and there is nothing very

unforgiving in that, I think.”

Anne did not receive the perfect conviction which the Admiral meant to

convey, but it would have been useless to press the enquiry farther.

She therefore satisfied herself with common-place remarks or quiet

attention, and the Admiral had it all his own way.

“Poor Frederick!” said he at last. “Now he must begin all over again

with somebody else. I think we must get him to Bath. Sophy must write,

and beg him to come to Bath. Here are pretty girls enough, I am sure.

It would be of no use to go to Uppercross again, for that other Miss

Musgrove, I find, is bespoke by her cousin, the young parson. Do not

you think, Miss Elliot, we had better try to get him to Bath?”

CHAPTER XIX.

While Admiral Croft was taking this walk with Anne, and expressing his

wish of getting Captain Wentworth to Bath, Captain Wentworth was

already on his way thither. Before Mrs Croft had written, he was

arrived, and the very next time Anne walked out, she saw him.

Mr Elliot was attending his two cousins and Mrs Clay. They were in

Milsom Street. It began to rain, not much, but enough to make shelter

desirable for women, and quite enough to make it very desirable for

Miss Elliot to have the advantage of being conveyed home in Lady

Dalrymple’s carriage, which was seen waiting at a little distance; she,

Anne, and Mrs Clay, therefore, turned into Molland’s, while Mr Elliot

stepped to Lady Dalrymple, to request her assistance. He soon joined

them again, successful, of course; Lady Dalrymple would be most happy

to take them home, and would call for them in a few minutes.

Her ladyship’s carriage was a barouche, and did not hold more than four

with any comfort. Miss Carteret was with her mother; consequently it

was not reasonable to expect accommodation for all the three Camden

Place ladies. There could be no doubt as to Miss Elliot. Whoever

suffered inconvenience, she must suffer none, but it occupied a little

time to settle the point of civility between the other two. The rain

was a mere trifle, and Anne was most sincere in preferring a walk with

Mr Elliot. But the rain was also a mere trifle to Mrs Clay; she would

hardly allow it even to drop at all, and her boots were so thick! much

thicker than Miss Anne’s; and, in short, her civility rendered her

quite as anxious to be left to walk with Mr Elliot as Anne could be,

and it was discussed between them with a generosity so polite and so

determined, that the others were obliged to settle it for them; Miss

Elliot maintaining that Mrs Clay had a little cold already, and Mr

Elliot deciding on appeal, that his cousin Anne’s boots were rather the

thickest.

It was fixed accordingly, that Mrs Clay should be of the party in the

carriage; and they had just reached this point, when Anne, as she sat

near the window, descried, most decidedly and distinctly, Captain

Wentworth walking down the street.

Her start was perceptible only to herself; but she instantly felt that

she was the greatest simpleton in the world, the most unaccountable and

absurd! For a few minutes she saw nothing before her; it was all

confusion. She was lost, and when she had scolded back her senses, she

found the others still waiting for the carriage, and Mr Elliot (always

obliging) just setting off for Union Street on a commission of Mrs

Clay’s.

She now felt a great inclination to go to the outer door; she wanted to

see if it rained. Why was she to suspect herself of another motive?

Captain Wentworth must be out of sight. She left her seat, she would

go; one half of her should not be always so much wiser than the other

half, or always suspecting the other of being worse than it was. She

would see if it rained. She was sent back, however, in a moment by the

entrance of Captain Wentworth himself, among a party of gentlemen and

ladies, evidently his acquaintance, and whom he must have joined a

little below Milsom Street. He was more obviously struck and confused

by the sight of her than she had ever observed before; he looked quite

red. For the first time, since their renewed acquaintance, she felt

that she was betraying the least sensibility of the two. She had the

advantage of him in the preparation of the last few moments. All the

overpowering, blinding, bewildering, first effects of strong surprise

were over with her. Still, however, she had enough to feel! It was

agitation, pain, pleasure, a something between delight and misery.

He spoke to her, and then turned away. The character of his manner was

embarrassment. She could not have called it either cold or friendly, or

anything so certainly as embarrassed.

After a short interval, however, he came towards her, and spoke again.

Mutual enquiries on common subjects passed: neither of them, probably,

much the wiser for what they heard, and Anne continuing fully sensible

of his being less at ease than formerly. They had by dint of being so

very much together, got to speak to each other with a considerable

portion of apparent indifference and calmness; but he could not do it

now. Time had changed him, or Louisa had changed him. There was

consciousness of some sort or other. He looked very well, not as if he

had been suffering in health or spirits, and he talked of Uppercross,

of the Musgroves, nay, even of Louisa, and had even a momentary look of

his own arch significance as he named her; but yet it was Captain

Wentworth not comfortable, not easy, not able to feign that he was.

It did not surprise, but it grieved Anne to observe that Elizabeth

would not know him. She saw that he saw Elizabeth, that Elizabeth saw

him, that there was complete internal recognition on each side; she was

convinced that he was ready to be acknowledged as an acquaintance,

expecting it, and she had the pain of seeing her sister turn away with

unalterable coldness.

Lady Dalrymple’s carriage, for which Miss Elliot was growing very

impatient, now drew up; the servant came in to announce it. It was

beginning to rain again, and altogether there was a delay, and a

bustle, and a talking, which must make all the little crowd in the shop

understand that Lady Dalrymple was calling to convey Miss Elliot. At

last Miss Elliot and her friend, unattended but by the servant, (for

there was no cousin returned), were walking off; and Captain Wentworth,

watching them, turned again to Anne, and by manner, rather than words,

was offering his services to her.

“I am much obliged to you,” was her answer, “but I am not going with

them. The carriage would not accommodate so many. I walk: I prefer

walking.”

“But it rains.”

“Oh! very little. Nothing that I regard.”

After a moment’s pause he said: “Though I came only yesterday, I have

equipped myself properly for Bath already, you see,” (pointing to a new

umbrella); “I wish you would make use of it, if you are determined to

walk; though I think it would be more prudent to let me get you a

chair.”

She was very much obliged to him, but declined it all, repeating her

conviction, that the rain would come to nothing at present, and adding,

“I am only waiting for Mr Elliot. He will be here in a moment, I am

sure.”

She had hardly spoken the words when Mr Elliot walked in. Captain

Wentworth recollected him perfectly. There was no difference between

him and the man who had stood on the steps at Lyme, admiring Anne as

she passed, except in the air and look and manner of the privileged

relation and friend. He came in with eagerness, appeared to see and

think only of her, apologised for his stay, was grieved to have kept

her waiting, and anxious to get her away without further loss of time

and before the rain increased; and in another moment they walked off

together, her arm under his, a gentle and embarrassed glance, and a

“Good morning to you!” being all that she had time for, as she passed

away.

As soon as they were out of sight, the ladies of Captain Wentworth’s

party began talking of them.

“Mr Elliot does not dislike his cousin, I fancy?”

“Oh! no, that is clear enough. One can guess what will happen there. He

is always with them; half lives in the family, I believe. What a very

good-looking man!”

“Yes, and Miss Atkinson, who dined with him once at the Wallises, says

he is the most agreeable man she ever was in company with.”

“She is pretty, I think; Anne Elliot; very pretty, when one comes to

look at her. It is not the fashion to say so, but I confess I admire

her more than her sister.”

“Oh! so do I.”

“And so do I. No comparison. But the men are all wild after Miss

Elliot. Anne is too delicate for them.”

Anne would have been particularly obliged to her cousin, if he would

have walked by her side all the way to Camden Place, without saying a

word. She had never found it so difficult to listen to him, though

nothing could exceed his solicitude and care, and though his subjects

were principally such as were wont to be always interesting: praise,

warm, just, and discriminating, of Lady Russell, and insinuations

highly rational against Mrs Clay. But just now she could think only of

Captain Wentworth. She could not understand his present feelings,

whether he were really suffering much from disappointment or not; and

till that point were settled, she could not be quite herself.

She hoped to be wise and reasonable in time; but alas! alas! she must

confess to herself that she was not wise yet.

Another circumstance very essential for her to know, was how long he

meant to be in Bath; he had not mentioned it, or she could not

recollect it. He might be only passing through. But it was more

probable that he should be come to stay. In that case, so liable as

every body was to meet every body in Bath, Lady Russell would in all

likelihood see him somewhere. Would she recollect him? How would it all

be?

She had already been obliged to tell Lady Russell that Louisa Musgrove

was to marry Captain Benwick. It had cost her something to encounter

Lady Russell’s surprise; and now, if she were by any chance to be

thrown into company with Captain Wentworth, her imperfect knowledge of

the matter might add another shade of prejudice against him.

The following morning Anne was out with her friend, and for the first

hour, in an incessant and fearful sort of watch for him in vain; but at

last, in returning down Pulteney Street, she distinguished him on the

right hand pavement at such a distance as to have him in view the

greater part of the street. There were many other men about him, many

groups walking the same way, but there was no mistaking him. She looked

instinctively at Lady Russell; but not from any mad idea of her

recognising him so soon as she did herself. No, it was not to be

supposed that Lady Russell would perceive him till they were nearly

opposite. She looked at her however, from time to time, anxiously; and

when the moment approached which must point him out, though not daring

to look again (for her own countenance she knew was unfit to be seen),

she was yet perfectly conscious of Lady Russell’s eyes being turned

exactly in the direction for him—of her being, in short, intently

observing him. She could thoroughly comprehend the sort of fascination

he must possess over Lady Russell’s mind, the difficulty it must be for

her to withdraw her eyes, the astonishment she must be feeling that

eight or nine years should have passed over him, and in foreign climes

and in active service too, without robbing him of one personal grace!

At last, Lady Russell drew back her head. “Now, how would she speak of

him?”

“You will wonder,” said she, “what has been fixing my eye so long; but

I was looking after some window-curtains, which Lady Alicia and Mrs

Frankland were telling me of last night. They described the

drawing-room window-curtains of one of the houses on this side of the

way, and this part of the street, as being the handsomest and best hung

of any in Bath, but could not recollect the exact number, and I have

been trying to find out which it could be; but I confess I can see no

curtains hereabouts that answer their description.”

Anne sighed and blushed and smiled, in pity and disdain, either at her

friend or herself. The part which provoked her most, was that in all

this waste of foresight and caution, she should have lost the right

moment for seeing whether he saw them.

A day or two passed without producing anything. The theatre or the

rooms, where he was most likely to be, were not fashionable enough for

the Elliots, whose evening amusements were solely in the elegant

stupidity of private parties, in which they were getting more and more

engaged; and Anne, wearied of such a state of stagnation, sick of

knowing nothing, and fancying herself stronger because her strength was

not tried, was quite impatient for the concert evening. It was a

concert for the benefit of a person patronised by Lady Dalrymple. Of

course they must attend. It was really expected to be a good one, and

Captain Wentworth was very fond of music. If she could only have a few

minutes conversation with him again, she fancied she should be

satisfied; and as to the power of addressing him, she felt all over

courage if the opportunity occurred. Elizabeth had turned from him,

Lady Russell overlooked him; her nerves were strengthened by these

circumstances; she felt that she owed him attention.

She had once partly promised Mrs Smith to spend the evening with her;

but in a short hurried call she excused herself and put it off, with

the more decided promise of a longer visit on the morrow. Mrs Smith

gave a most good-humoured acquiescence.

“By all means,” said she; “only tell me all about it, when you do come.

Who is your party?”

Anne named them all. Mrs Smith made no reply; but when she was leaving

her said, and with an expression half serious, half arch, “Well, I

heartily wish your concert may answer; and do not fail me to-morrow if

you can come; for I begin to have a foreboding that I may not have many

more visits from you.”

Anne was startled and confused; but after standing in a moment’s

suspense, was obliged, and not sorry to be obliged, to hurry away.

CHAPTER XX.

Sir Walter, his two daughters, and Mrs Clay, were the earliest of all

their party at the rooms in the evening; and as Lady Dalrymple must be

waited for, they took their station by one of the fires in the Octagon

Room. But hardly were they so settled, when the door opened again, and

Captain Wentworth walked in alone. Anne was the nearest to him, and

making yet a little advance, she instantly spoke. He was preparing only

to bow and pass on, but her gentle “How do you do?” brought him out of

the straight line to stand near her, and make enquiries in return, in

spite of the formidable father and sister in the back ground. Their

being in the back ground was a support to Anne; she knew nothing of

their looks, and felt equal to everything which she believed right to

be done.

While they were speaking, a whispering between her father and Elizabeth

caught her ear. She could not distinguish, but she must guess the

subject; and on Captain Wentworth’s making a distant bow, she

comprehended that her father had judged so well as to give him that

simple acknowledgement of acquaintance, and she was just in time by a

side glance to see a slight curtsey from Elizabeth herself. This,

though late, and reluctant, and ungracious, was yet better than

nothing, and her spirits improved.

After talking, however, of the weather, and Bath, and the concert,

their conversation began to flag, and so little was said at last, that

she was expecting him to go every moment, but he did not; he seemed in

no hurry to leave her; and presently with renewed spirit, with a little

smile, a little glow, he said—

“I have hardly seen you since our day at Lyme. I am afraid you must

have suffered from the shock, and the more from its not overpowering

you at the time.”

She assured him that she had not.

“It was a frightful hour,” said he, “a frightful day!” and he passed

his hand across his eyes, as if the remembrance were still too painful,

but in a moment, half smiling again, added, “The day has produced some

effects however; has had some consequences which must be considered as

the very reverse of frightful. When you had the presence of mind to

suggest that Benwick would be the properest person to fetch a surgeon,

you could have little idea of his being eventually one of those most

concerned in her recovery.”

“Certainly I could have none. But it appears—I should hope it would be

a very happy match. There are on both sides good principles and good

temper.”

“Yes,” said he, looking not exactly forward; “but there, I think, ends

the resemblance. With all my soul I wish them happy, and rejoice over

every circumstance in favour of it. They have no difficulties to

contend with at home, no opposition, no caprice, no delays. The

Musgroves are behaving like themselves, most honourably and kindly,

only anxious with true parental hearts to promote their daughter’s

comfort. All this is much, very much in favour of their happiness; more

than perhaps—”

He stopped. A sudden recollection seemed to occur, and to give him some

taste of that emotion which was reddening Anne’s cheeks and fixing her

eyes on the ground. After clearing his throat, however, he proceeded

thus—

“I confess that I do think there is a disparity, too great a disparity,

and in a point no less essential than mind. I regard Louisa Musgrove as

a very amiable, sweet-tempered girl, and not deficient in

understanding, but Benwick is something more. He is a clever man, a

reading man; and I confess, that I do consider his attaching himself to

her with some surprise. Had it been the effect of gratitude, had he

learnt to love her, because he believed her to be preferring him, it

would have been another thing. But I have no reason to suppose it so.

It seems, on the contrary, to have been a perfectly spontaneous,

untaught feeling on his side, and this surprises me. A man like him, in

his situation! with a heart pierced, wounded, almost broken! Fanny

Harville was a very superior creature, and his attachment to her was

indeed attachment. A man does not recover from such a devotion of the

heart to such a woman. He ought not; he does not.”

Either from the consciousness, however, that his friend had recovered,

or from other consciousness, he went no farther; and Anne who, in spite

of the agitated voice in which the latter part had been uttered, and in

spite of all the various noises of the room, the almost ceaseless slam

of the door, and ceaseless buzz of persons walking through, had

distinguished every word, was struck, gratified, confused, and

beginning to breathe very quick, and feel an hundred things in a

moment. It was impossible for her to enter on such a subject; and yet,

after a pause, feeling the necessity of speaking, and having not the

smallest wish for a total change, she only deviated so far as to say—

“You were a good while at Lyme, I think?”

“About a fortnight. I could not leave it till Louisa’s doing well was

quite ascertained. I had been too deeply concerned in the mischief to

be soon at peace. It had been my doing, solely mine. She would not have

been obstinate if I had not been weak. The country round Lyme is very

fine. I walked and rode a great deal; and the more I saw, the more I

found to admire.”

“I should very much like to see Lyme again,” said Anne.

“Indeed! I should not have supposed that you could have found anything

in Lyme to inspire such a feeling. The horror and distress you were

involved in, the stretch of mind, the wear of spirits! I should have

thought your last impressions of Lyme must have been strong disgust.”

“The last hours were certainly very painful,” replied Anne; “but when

pain is over, the remembrance of it often becomes a pleasure. One does

not love a place the less for having suffered in it, unless it has been

all suffering, nothing but suffering, which was by no means the case at

Lyme. We were only in anxiety and distress during the last two hours,

and previously there had been a great deal of enjoyment. So much

novelty and beauty! I have travelled so little, that every fresh place

would be interesting to me; but there is real beauty at Lyme; and in

short” (with a faint blush at some recollections), “altogether my

impressions of the place are very agreeable.”

As she ceased, the entrance door opened again, and the very party

appeared for whom they were waiting. “Lady Dalrymple, Lady Dalrymple,”

was the rejoicing sound; and with all the eagerness compatible with

anxious elegance, Sir Walter and his two ladies stepped forward to meet

her. Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret, escorted by Mr Elliot and

Colonel Wallis, who had happened to arrive nearly at the same instant,

advanced into the room. The others joined them, and it was a group in

which Anne found herself also necessarily included. She was divided

from Captain Wentworth. Their interesting, almost too interesting

conversation must be broken up for a time, but slight was the penance

compared with the happiness which brought it on! She had learnt, in the

last ten minutes, more of his feelings towards Louisa, more of all his

feelings than she dared to think of; and she gave herself up to the

demands of the party, to the needful civilities of the moment, with

exquisite, though agitated sensations. She was in good humour with all.

She had received ideas which disposed her to be courteous and kind to

all, and to pity every one, as being less happy than herself.

The delightful emotions were a little subdued, when on stepping back

from the group, to be joined again by Captain Wentworth, she saw that

he was gone. She was just in time to see him turn into the Concert

Room. He was gone; he had disappeared, she felt a moment’s regret. But

“they should meet again. He would look for her, he would find her out

before the evening were over, and at present, perhaps, it was as well

to be asunder. She was in need of a little interval for recollection.”

Upon Lady Russell’s appearance soon afterwards, the whole party was

collected, and all that remained was to marshal themselves, and proceed

into the Concert Room; and be of all the consequence in their power,

draw as many eyes, excite as many whispers, and disturb as many people

as they could.

Very, very happy were both Elizabeth and Anne Elliot as they walked in.

Elizabeth arm in arm with Miss Carteret, and looking on the broad back

of the dowager Viscountess Dalrymple before her, had nothing to wish

for which did not seem within her reach; and Anne—but it would be an

insult to the nature of Anne’s felicity, to draw any comparison between

it and her sister’s; the origin of one all selfish vanity, of the other

all generous attachment.

Anne saw nothing, thought nothing of the brilliancy of the room. Her

happiness was from within. Her eyes were bright and her cheeks glowed;

but she knew nothing about it. She was thinking only of the last half

hour, and as they passed to their seats, her mind took a hasty range

over it. His choice of subjects, his expressions, and still more his

manner and look, had been such as she could see in only one light. His

opinion of Louisa Musgrove’s inferiority, an opinion which he had

seemed solicitous to give, his wonder at Captain Benwick, his feelings

as to a first, strong attachment; sentences begun which he could not

finish, his half averted eyes and more than half expressive glance,

all, all declared that he had a heart returning to her at least; that

anger, resentment, avoidance, were no more; and that they were

succeeded, not merely by friendship and regard, but by the tenderness

of the past. Yes, some share of the tenderness of the past. She could

not contemplate the change as implying less. He must love her.

These were thoughts, with their attendant visions, which occupied and

flurried her too much to leave her any power of observation; and she

passed along the room without having a glimpse of him, without even

trying to discern him. When their places were determined on, and they

were all properly arranged, she looked round to see if he should happen

to be in the same part of the room, but he was not; her eye could not

reach him; and the concert being just opening, she must consent for a

time to be happy in a humbler way.

The party was divided and disposed of on two contiguous benches: Anne

was among those on the foremost, and Mr Elliot had manœuvred so well,

with the assistance of his friend Colonel Wallis, as to have a seat by

her. Miss Elliot, surrounded by her cousins, and the principal object

of Colonel Wallis’s gallantry, was quite contented.

Anne’s mind was in a most favourable state for the entertainment of the

evening; it was just occupation enough: she had feelings for the

tender, spirits for the gay, attention for the scientific, and patience

for the wearisome; and had never liked a concert better, at least

during the first act. Towards the close of it, in the interval

succeeding an Italian song, she explained the words of the song to Mr

Elliot. They had a concert bill between them.

“This,” said she, “is nearly the sense, or rather the meaning of the

words, for certainly the sense of an Italian love-song must not be

talked of, but it is as nearly the meaning as I can give; for I do not

pretend to understand the language. I am a very poor Italian scholar.”

“Yes, yes, I see you are. I see you know nothing of the matter. You

have only knowledge enough of the language to translate at sight these

inverted, transposed, curtailed Italian lines, into clear,

comprehensible, elegant English. You need not say anything more of your

ignorance. Here is complete proof.”

“I will not oppose such kind politeness; but I should be sorry to be

examined by a real proficient.”

“I have not had the pleasure of visiting in Camden Place so long,”

replied he, “without knowing something of Miss Anne Elliot; and I do

regard her as one who is too modest for the world in general to be

aware of half her accomplishments, and too highly accomplished for

modesty to be natural in any other woman.”

“For shame! for shame! this is too much flattery. I forget what we are

to have next,” turning to the bill.

“Perhaps,” said Mr Elliot, speaking low, “I have had a longer

acquaintance with your character than you are aware of.”

“Indeed! How so? You can have been acquainted with it only since I came

to Bath, excepting as you might hear me previously spoken of in my own

family.”

“I knew you by report long before you came to Bath. I had heard you

described by those who knew you intimately. I have been acquainted with

you by character many years. Your person, your disposition,

accomplishments, manner; they were all present to me.”

Mr Elliot was not disappointed in the interest he hoped to raise. No

one can withstand the charm of such a mystery. To have been described

long ago to a recent acquaintance, by nameless people, is irresistible;

and Anne was all curiosity. She wondered, and questioned him eagerly;

but in vain. He delighted in being asked, but he would not tell.

“No, no, some time or other, perhaps, but not now. He would mention no

names now; but such, he could assure her, had been the fact. He had

many years ago received such a description of Miss Anne Elliot as had

inspired him with the highest idea of her merit, and excited the

warmest curiosity to know her.”

Anne could think of no one so likely to have spoken with partiality of

her many years ago as the Mr Wentworth of Monkford, Captain Wentworth’s

brother. He might have been in Mr Elliot’s company, but she had not

courage to ask the question.

“The name of Anne Elliot,” said he, “has long had an interesting sound

to me. Very long has it possessed a charm over my fancy; and, if I

dared, I would breathe my wishes that the name might never change.”

Such, she believed, were his words; but scarcely had she received their

sound, than her attention was caught by other sounds immediately behind

her, which rendered every thing else trivial. Her father and Lady

Dalrymple were speaking.

“A well-looking man,” said Sir Walter, “a very well-looking man.”

“A very fine young man indeed!” said Lady Dalrymple. “More air than one

often sees in Bath. Irish, I dare say.”

“No, I just know his name. A bowing acquaintance. Wentworth; Captain

Wentworth of the navy. His sister married my tenant in Somersetshire,

the Croft, who rents Kellynch.”

Before Sir Walter had reached this point, Anne’s eyes had caught the

right direction, and distinguished Captain Wentworth standing among a

cluster of men at a little distance. As her eyes fell on him, his

seemed to be withdrawn from her. It had that appearance. It seemed as

if she had been one moment too late; and as long as she dared observe,

he did not look again: but the performance was recommencing, and she

was forced to seem to restore her attention to the orchestra and look

straight forward.

When she could give another glance, he had moved away. He could not

have come nearer to her if he would; she was so surrounded and shut in:

but she would rather have caught his eye.

Mr Elliot’s speech, too, distressed her. She had no longer any

inclination to talk to him. She wished him not so near her.

The first act was over. Now she hoped for some beneficial change; and,

after a period of nothing-saying amongst the party, some of them did

decide on going in quest of tea. Anne was one of the few who did not

choose to move. She remained in her seat, and so did Lady Russell; but

she had the pleasure of getting rid of Mr Elliot; and she did not mean,

whatever she might feel on Lady Russell’s account, to shrink from

conversation with Captain Wentworth, if he gave her the opportunity.

She was persuaded by Lady Russell’s countenance that she had seen him.

He did not come however. Anne sometimes fancied she discerned him at a

distance, but he never came. The anxious interval wore away

unproductively. The others returned, the room filled again, benches

were reclaimed and repossessed, and another hour of pleasure or of

penance was to be sat out, another hour of music was to give delight or

the gapes, as real or affected taste for it prevailed. To Anne, it

chiefly wore the prospect of an hour of agitation. She could not quit

that room in peace without seeing Captain Wentworth once more, without

the interchange of one friendly look.

In re-settling themselves there were now many changes, the result of

which was favourable for her. Colonel Wallis declined sitting down

again, and Mr Elliot was invited by Elizabeth and Miss Carteret, in a

manner not to be refused, to sit between them; and by some other

removals, and a little scheming of her own, Anne was enabled to place

herself much nearer the end of the bench than she had been before, much

more within reach of a passer-by. She could not do so, without

comparing herself with Miss Larolles, the inimitable Miss Larolles; but

still she did it, and not with much happier effect; though by what

seemed prosperity in the shape of an early abdication in her next

neighbours, she found herself at the very end of the bench before the

concert closed.

Such was her situation, with a vacant space at hand, when Captain

Wentworth was again in sight. She saw him not far off. He saw her too;

yet he looked grave, and seemed irresolute, and only by very slow

degrees came at last near enough to speak to her. She felt that

something must be the matter. The change was indubitable. The

difference between his present air and what it had been in the Octagon

Room was strikingly great. Why was it? She thought of her father, of

Lady Russell. Could there have been any unpleasant glances? He began by

speaking of the concert gravely, more like the Captain Wentworth of

Uppercross; owned himself disappointed, had expected singing; and in

short, must confess that he should not be sorry when it was over. Anne

replied, and spoke in defence of the performance so well, and yet in

allowance for his feelings so pleasantly, that his countenance

improved, and he replied again with almost a smile. They talked for a

few minutes more; the improvement held; he even looked down towards the

bench, as if he saw a place on it well worth occupying; when at that

moment a touch on her shoulder obliged Anne to turn round. It came from

Mr Elliot. He begged her pardon, but she must be applied to, to explain

Italian again. Miss Carteret was very anxious to have a general idea of

what was next to be sung. Anne could not refuse; but never had she

sacrificed to politeness with a more suffering spirit.

A few minutes, though as few as possible, were inevitably consumed; and

when her own mistress again, when able to turn and look as she had done

before, she found herself accosted by Captain Wentworth, in a reserved

yet hurried sort of farewell. “He must wish her good night; he was

going; he should get home as fast as he could.”

“Is not this song worth staying for?” said Anne, suddenly struck by an

idea which made her yet more anxious to be encouraging.

“No!” he replied impressively, “there is nothing worth my staying for;”

and he was gone directly.

Jealousy of Mr Elliot! It was the only intelligible motive. Captain

Wentworth jealous of her affection! Could she have believed it a week

ago; three hours ago! For a moment the gratification was exquisite.

But, alas! there were very different thoughts to succeed. How was such

jealousy to be quieted? How was the truth to reach him? How, in all the

peculiar disadvantages of their respective situations, would he ever

learn of her real sentiments? It was misery to think of Mr Elliot’s

attentions. Their evil was incalculable.

CHAPTER XXI.

Anne recollected with pleasure the next morning her promise of going to

Mrs Smith, meaning that it should engage her from home at the time when

Mr Elliot would be most likely to call; for to avoid Mr Elliot was

almost a first object.

She felt a great deal of good-will towards him. In spite of the

mischief of his attentions, she owed him gratitude and regard, perhaps

compassion. She could not help thinking much of the extraordinary

circumstances attending their acquaintance, of the right which he

seemed to have to interest her, by everything in situation, by his own

sentiments, by his early prepossession. It was altogether very

extraordinary; flattering, but painful. There was much to regret. How

she might have felt had there been no Captain Wentworth in the case,

was not worth enquiry; for there was a Captain Wentworth; and be the

conclusion of the present suspense good or bad, her affection would be

his for ever. Their union, she believed, could not divide her more from

other men, than their final separation.

Prettier musings of high-wrought love and eternal constancy, could

never have passed along the streets of Bath, than Anne was sporting

with from Camden Place to Westgate Buildings. It was almost enough to

spread purification and perfume all the way.

She was sure of a pleasant reception; and her friend seemed this

morning particularly obliged to her for coming, seemed hardly to have

expected her, though it had been an appointment.

An account of the concert was immediately claimed; and Anne’s

recollections of the concert were quite happy enough to animate her

features and make her rejoice to talk of it. All that she could tell

she told most gladly, but the all was little for one who had been

there, and unsatisfactory for such an enquirer as Mrs Smith, who had

already heard, through the short cut of a laundress and a waiter,

rather more of the general success and produce of the evening than Anne

could relate, and who now asked in vain for several particulars of the

company. Everybody of any consequence or notoriety in Bath was well

know by name to Mrs Smith.

“The little Durands were there, I conclude,” said she, “with their

mouths open to catch the music, like unfledged sparrows ready to be

fed. They never miss a concert.”

“Yes; I did not see them myself, but I heard Mr Elliot say they were in

the room.”

“The Ibbotsons, were they there? and the two new beauties, with the

tall Irish officer, who is talked of for one of them.”

“I do not know. I do not think they were.”

“Old Lady Mary Maclean? I need not ask after her. She never misses, I

know; and you must have seen her. She must have been in your own

circle; for as you went with Lady Dalrymple, you were in the seats of

grandeur, round the orchestra, of course.”

“No, that was what I dreaded. It would have been very unpleasant to me

in every respect. But happily Lady Dalrymple always chooses to be

farther off; and we were exceedingly well placed, that is, for hearing;

I must not say for seeing, because I appear to have seen very little.”

“Oh! you saw enough for your own amusement. I can understand. There is

a sort of domestic enjoyment to be known even in a crowd, and this you

had. You were a large party in yourselves, and you wanted nothing

beyond.”

“But I ought to have looked about me more,” said Anne, conscious while

she spoke that there had in fact been no want of looking about, that

the object only had been deficient.

“No, no; you were better employed. You need not tell me that you had a

pleasant evening. I see it in your eye. I perfectly see how the hours

passed: that you had always something agreeable to listen to. In the

intervals of the concert it was conversation.”

Anne half smiled and said, “Do you see that in my eye?”

“Yes, I do. Your countenance perfectly informs me that you were in

company last night with the person whom you think the most agreeable in

the world, the person who interests you at this present time more than

all the rest of the world put together.”

A blush overspread Anne’s cheeks. She could say nothing.

“And such being the case,” continued Mrs Smith, after a short pause, “I

hope you believe that I do know how to value your kindness in coming to

me this morning. It is really very good of you to come and sit with me,

when you must have so many pleasanter demands upon your time.”

Anne heard nothing of this. She was still in the astonishment and

confusion excited by her friend’s penetration, unable to imagine how

any report of Captain Wentworth could have reached her. After another

short silence—

“Pray,” said Mrs Smith, “is Mr Elliot aware of your acquaintance with

me? Does he know that I am in Bath?”

“Mr Elliot!” repeated Anne, looking up surprised. A moment’s reflection

shewed her the mistake she had been under. She caught it

instantaneously; and recovering her courage with the feeling of safety,

soon added, more composedly, “Are you acquainted with Mr Elliot?”

“I have been a good deal acquainted with him,” replied Mrs Smith,

gravely, “but it seems worn out now. It is a great while since we met.”

“I was not at all aware of this. You never mentioned it before. Had I

known it, I would have had the pleasure of talking to him about you.”

“To confess the truth,” said Mrs Smith, assuming her usual air of

cheerfulness, “that is exactly the pleasure I want you to have. I want

you to talk about me to Mr Elliot. I want your interest with him. He

can be of essential service to me; and if you would have the goodness,

my dear Miss Elliot, to make it an object to yourself, of course it is

done.”

“I should be extremely happy; I hope you cannot doubt my willingness to

be of even the slightest use to you,” replied Anne; “but I suspect that

you are considering me as having a higher claim on Mr Elliot, a greater

right to influence him, than is really the case. I am sure you have,

somehow or other, imbibed such a notion. You must consider me only as

Mr Elliot’s relation. If in that light there is anything which you

suppose his cousin might fairly ask of him, I beg you would not

hesitate to employ me.”

Mrs Smith gave her a penetrating glance, and then, smiling, said—

“I have been a little premature, I perceive; I beg your pardon. I ought

to have waited for official information. But now, my dear Miss Elliot,

as an old friend, do give me a hint as to when I may speak. Next week?

To be sure by next week I may be allowed to think it all settled, and

build my own selfish schemes on Mr Elliot’s good fortune.”

“No,” replied Anne, “nor next week, nor next, nor next. I assure you

that nothing of the sort you are thinking of will be settled any week.

I am not going to marry Mr Elliot. I should like to know why you

imagine I am?”

Mrs Smith looked at her again, looked earnestly, smiled, shook her

head, and exclaimed—

“Now, how I do wish I understood you! How I do wish I knew what you

were at! I have a great idea that you do not design to be cruel, when

the right moment occurs. Till it does come, you know, we women never

mean to have anybody. It is a thing of course among us, that every man

is refused, till he offers. But why should you be cruel? Let me plead

for my—present friend I cannot call him, but for my former friend.

Where can you look for a more suitable match? Where could you expect a

more gentlemanlike, agreeable man? Let me recommend Mr Elliot. I am

sure you hear nothing but good of him from Colonel Wallis; and who can

know him better than Colonel Wallis?”

“My dear Mrs Smith, Mr Elliot’s wife has not been dead much above half

a year. He ought not to be supposed to be paying his addresses to any

one.”

“Oh! if these are your only objections,” cried Mrs Smith, archly, “Mr

Elliot is safe, and I shall give myself no more trouble about him. Do

not forget me when you are married, that’s all. Let him know me to be a

friend of yours, and then he will think little of the trouble required,

which it is very natural for him now, with so many affairs and

engagements of his own, to avoid and get rid of as he can; very

natural, perhaps. Ninety-nine out of a hundred would do the same. Of

course, he cannot be aware of the importance to me. Well, my dear Miss

Elliot, I hope and trust you will be very happy. Mr Elliot has sense to

understand the value of such a woman. Your peace will not be

shipwrecked as mine has been. You are safe in all worldly matters, and

safe in his character. He will not be led astray; he will not be misled

by others to his ruin.”

“No,” said Anne, “I can readily believe all that of my cousin. He seems

to have a calm decided temper, not at all open to dangerous

impressions. I consider him with great respect. I have no reason, from

any thing that has fallen within my observation, to do otherwise. But I

have not known him long; and he is not a man, I think, to be known

intimately soon. Will not this manner of speaking of him, Mrs Smith,

convince you that he is nothing to me? Surely this must be calm enough.

And, upon my word, he is nothing to me. Should he ever propose to me

(which I have very little reason to imagine he has any thought of

doing), I shall not accept him. I assure you I shall not. I assure you,

Mr Elliot had not the share which you have been supposing, in whatever

pleasure the concert of last night might afford: not Mr Elliot; it is

not Mr Elliot that—”

She stopped, regretting with a deep blush that she had implied so much;

but less would hardly have been sufficient. Mrs Smith would hardly have

believed so soon in Mr Elliot’s failure, but from the perception of

there being a somebody else. As it was, she instantly submitted, and

with all the semblance of seeing nothing beyond; and Anne, eager to

escape farther notice, was impatient to know why Mrs Smith should have

fancied she was to marry Mr Elliot; where she could have received the

idea, or from whom she could have heard it.

“Do tell me how it first came into your head.”

“It first came into my head,” replied Mrs Smith, “upon finding how much

you were together, and feeling it to be the most probable thing in the

world to be wished for by everybody belonging to either of you; and you

may depend upon it that all your acquaintance have disposed of you in

the same way. But I never heard it spoken of till two days ago.”

“And has it indeed been spoken of?”

“Did you observe the woman who opened the door to you when you called

yesterday?”

“No. Was not it Mrs Speed, as usual, or the maid? I observed no one in

particular.”

“It was my friend Mrs Rooke; Nurse Rooke; who, by-the-bye, had a great

curiosity to see you, and was delighted to be in the way to let you in.

She came away from Marlborough Buildings only on Sunday; and she it was

who told me you were to marry Mr Elliot. She had had it from Mrs Wallis

herself, which did not seem bad authority. She sat an hour with me on

Monday evening, and gave me the whole history.” “The whole history,”

repeated Anne, laughing. “She could not make a very long history, I

think, of one such little article of unfounded news.”

Mrs Smith said nothing.

“But,” continued Anne, presently, “though there is no truth in my

having this claim on Mr Elliot, I should be extremely happy to be of

use to you in any way that I could. Shall I mention to him your being

in Bath? Shall I take any message?”

“No, I thank you: no, certainly not. In the warmth of the moment, and

under a mistaken impression, I might, perhaps, have endeavoured to

interest you in some circumstances; but not now. No, I thank you, I

have nothing to trouble you with.”

“I think you spoke of having known Mr Elliot many years?”

“I did.”

“Not before he was married, I suppose?”

“Yes; he was not married when I knew him first.”

“And—were you much acquainted?”

“Intimately.”

“Indeed! Then do tell me what he was at that time of life. I have a

great curiosity to know what Mr Elliot was as a very young man. Was he

at all such as he appears now?”

“I have not seen Mr Elliot these three years,” was Mrs Smith’s answer,

given so gravely that it was impossible to pursue the subject farther;

and Anne felt that she had gained nothing but an increase of curiosity.

They were both silent: Mrs Smith very thoughtful. At last—

“I beg your pardon, my dear Miss Elliot,” she cried, in her natural

tone of cordiality, “I beg your pardon for the short answers I have

been giving you, but I have been uncertain what I ought to do. I have

been doubting and considering as to what I ought to tell you. There

were many things to be taken into the account. One hates to be

officious, to be giving bad impressions, making mischief. Even the

smooth surface of family-union seems worth preserving, though there may

be nothing durable beneath. However, I have determined; I think I am

right; I think you ought to be made acquainted with Mr Elliot’s real

character. Though I fully believe that, at present, you have not the

smallest intention of accepting him, there is no saying what may

happen. You might, some time or other, be differently affected towards

him. Hear the truth, therefore, now, while you are unprejudiced. Mr

Elliot is a man without heart or conscience; a designing, wary,

cold-blooded being, who thinks only of himself; whom for his own

interest or ease, would be guilty of any cruelty, or any treachery,

that could be perpetrated without risk of his general character. He has

no feeling for others. Those whom he has been the chief cause of

leading into ruin, he can neglect and desert without the smallest

compunction. He is totally beyond the reach of any sentiment of justice

or compassion. Oh! he is black at heart, hollow and black!”

Anne’s astonished air, and exclamation of wonder, made her pause, and

in a calmer manner, she added,

“My expressions startle you. You must allow for an injured, angry

woman. But I will try to command myself. I will not abuse him. I will

only tell you what I have found him. Facts shall speak. He was the

intimate friend of my dear husband, who trusted and loved him, and

thought him as good as himself. The intimacy had been formed before our

marriage. I found them most intimate friends; and I, too, became

excessively pleased with Mr Elliot, and entertained the highest opinion

of him. At nineteen, you know, one does not think very seriously; but

Mr Elliot appeared to me quite as good as others, and much more

agreeable than most others, and we were almost always together. We were

principally in town, living in very good style. He was then the

inferior in circumstances; he was then the poor one; he had chambers in

the Temple, and it was as much as he could do to support the appearance

of a gentleman. He had always a home with us whenever he chose it; he

was always welcome; he was like a brother. My poor Charles, who had the

finest, most generous spirit in the world, would have divided his last

farthing with him; and I know that his purse was open to him; I know

that he often assisted him.”

“This must have been about that very period of Mr Elliot’s life,” said

Anne, “which has always excited my particular curiosity. It must have

been about the same time that he became known to my father and sister.

I never knew him myself; I only heard of him; but there was a something

in his conduct then, with regard to my father and sister, and

afterwards in the circumstances of his marriage, which I never could

quite reconcile with present times. It seemed to announce a different

sort of man.”

“I know it all, I know it all,” cried Mrs Smith. “He had been

introduced to Sir Walter and your sister before I was acquainted with

him, but I heard him speak of them for ever. I know he was invited and

encouraged, and I know he did not choose to go. I can satisfy you,

perhaps, on points which you would little expect; and as to his

marriage, I knew all about it at the time. I was privy to all the fors

and againsts; I was the friend to whom he confided his hopes and plans;

and though I did not know his wife previously, her inferior situation

in society, indeed, rendered that impossible, yet I knew her all her

life afterwards, or at least till within the last two years of her

life, and can answer any question you may wish to put.”

“Nay,” said Anne, “I have no particular enquiry to make about her. I

have always understood they were not a happy couple. But I should like

to know why, at that time of his life, he should slight my father’s

acquaintance as he did. My father was certainly disposed to take very

kind and proper notice of him. Why did Mr Elliot draw back?”

“Mr Elliot,” replied Mrs Smith, “at that period of his life, had one

object in view: to make his fortune, and by a rather quicker process

than the law. He was determined to make it by marriage. He was

determined, at least, not to mar it by an imprudent marriage; and I

know it was his belief (whether justly or not, of course I cannot

decide), that your father and sister, in their civilities and

invitations, were designing a match between the heir and the young

lady, and it was impossible that such a match should have answered his

ideas of wealth and independence. That was his motive for drawing back,

I can assure you. He told me the whole story. He had no concealments

with me. It was curious, that having just left you behind me in Bath,

my first and principal acquaintance on marrying should be your cousin;

and that, through him, I should be continually hearing of your father

and sister. He described one Miss Elliot, and I thought very

affectionately of the other.”

“Perhaps,” cried Anne, struck by a sudden idea, “you sometimes spoke of

me to Mr Elliot?”

“To be sure I did; very often. I used to boast of my own Anne Elliot,

and vouch for your being a very different creature from—”

She checked herself just in time.

“This accounts for something which Mr Elliot said last night,” cried

Anne. “This explains it. I found he had been used to hear of me. I

could not comprehend how. What wild imaginations one forms where dear

self is concerned! How sure to be mistaken! But I beg your pardon; I

have interrupted you. Mr Elliot married then completely for money? The

circumstances, probably, which first opened your eyes to his

character.”

Mrs Smith hesitated a little here. “Oh! those things are too common.

When one lives in the world, a man or woman’s marrying for money is too

common to strike one as it ought. I was very young, and associated only

with the young, and we were a thoughtless, gay set, without any strict

rules of conduct. We lived for enjoyment. I think differently now; time

and sickness and sorrow have given me other notions; but at that period

I must own I saw nothing reprehensible in what Mr Elliot was doing. ‘To

do the best for himself,’ passed as a duty.”

“But was not she a very low woman?”

“Yes; which I objected to, but he would not regard. Money, money, was

all that he wanted. Her father was a grazier, her grandfather had been

a butcher, but that was all nothing. She was a fine woman, had had a

decent education, was brought forward by some cousins, thrown by chance

into Mr Elliot’s company, and fell in love with him; and not a

difficulty or a scruple was there on his side, with respect to her

birth. All his caution was spent in being secured of the real amount of

her fortune, before he committed himself. Depend upon it, whatever

esteem Mr Elliot may have for his own situation in life now, as a young

man he had not the smallest value for it. His chance for the Kellynch

estate was something, but all the honour of the family he held as cheap

as dirt. I have often heard him declare, that if baronetcies were

saleable, anybody should have his for fifty pounds, arms and motto,

name and livery included; but I will not pretend to repeat half that I

used to hear him say on that subject. It would not be fair; and yet you

ought to have proof, for what is all this but assertion, and you shall

have proof.”

“Indeed, my dear Mrs Smith, I want none,” cried Anne. “You have

asserted nothing contradictory to what Mr Elliot appeared to be some

years ago. This is all in confirmation, rather, of what we used to hear

and believe. I am more curious to know why he should be so different

now.”

“But for my satisfaction, if you will have the goodness to ring for

Mary; stay: I am sure you will have the still greater goodness of going

yourself into my bedroom, and bringing me the small inlaid box which

you will find on the upper shelf of the closet.”

Anne, seeing her friend to be earnestly bent on it, did as she was

desired. The box was brought and placed before her, and Mrs Smith,

sighing over it as she unlocked it, said—

“This is full of papers belonging to him, to my husband; a small

portion only of what I had to look over when I lost him. The letter I

am looking for was one written by Mr Elliot to him before our marriage,

and happened to be saved; why, one can hardly imagine. But he was

careless and immethodical, like other men, about those things; and when

I came to examine his papers, I found it with others still more

trivial, from different people scattered here and there, while many

letters and memorandums of real importance had been destroyed. Here it

is; I would not burn it, because being even then very little satisfied

with Mr Elliot, I was determined to preserve every document of former

intimacy. I have now another motive for being glad that I can produce

it.”

This was the letter, directed to “Charles Smith, Esq. Tunbridge Wells,”

and dated from London, as far back as July, 1803:—

“Dear Smith,

“I have received yours. Your kindness almost overpowers me. I wish

nature had made such hearts as yours more common, but I have lived

three-and-twenty years in the world, and have seen none like it. At

present, believe me, I have no need of your services, being in cash

again. Give me joy: I have got rid of Sir Walter and Miss. They are

gone back to Kellynch, and almost made me swear to visit them this

summer; but my first visit to Kellynch will be with a surveyor, to tell

me how to bring it with best advantage to the hammer. The baronet,

nevertheless, is not unlikely to marry again; he is quite fool enough.

If he does, however, they will leave me in peace, which may be a decent

equivalent for the reversion. He is worse than last year.

“I wish I had any name but Elliot. I am sick of it. The name of Walter

I can drop, thank God! and I desire you will never insult me with my

second W. again, meaning, for the rest of my life, to be only yours

truly,

“WM. ELLIOT.”

Such a letter could not be read without putting Anne in a glow; and Mrs

Smith, observing the high colour in her face, said—

“The language, I know, is highly disrespectful. Though I have forgot

the exact terms, I have a perfect impression of the general meaning.

But it shows you the man. Mark his professions to my poor husband. Can

any thing be stronger?”

Anne could not immediately get over the shock and mortification of

finding such words applied to her father. She was obliged to recollect

that her seeing the letter was a violation of the laws of honour, that

no one ought to be judged or to be known by such testimonies, that no

private correspondence could bear the eye of others, before she could

recover calmness enough to return the letter which she had been

meditating over, and say—

“Thank you. This is full proof undoubtedly; proof of every thing you

were saying. But why be acquainted with us now?”

“I can explain this too,” cried Mrs Smith, smiling.

“Can you really?”

“Yes. I have shewn you Mr Elliot as he was a dozen years ago, and I

will shew him as he is now. I cannot produce written proof again, but I

can give as authentic oral testimony as you can desire, of what he is

now wanting, and what he is now doing. He is no hypocrite now. He truly

wants to marry you. His present attentions to your family are very

sincere: quite from the heart. I will give you my authority: his friend

Colonel Wallis.”

“Colonel Wallis! you are acquainted with him?”

“No. It does not come to me in quite so direct a line as that; it takes

a bend or two, but nothing of consequence. The stream is as good as at

first; the little rubbish it collects in the turnings is easily moved

away. Mr Elliot talks unreservedly to Colonel Wallis of his views on

you, which said Colonel Wallis, I imagine to be, in himself, a

sensible, careful, discerning sort of character; but Colonel Wallis has

a very pretty silly wife, to whom he tells things which he had better

not, and he repeats it all to her. She in the overflowing spirits of

her recovery, repeats it all to her nurse; and the nurse knowing my

acquaintance with you, very naturally brings it all to me. On Monday

evening, my good friend Mrs Rooke let me thus much into the secrets of

Marlborough Buildings. When I talked of a whole history, therefore, you

see I was not romancing so much as you supposed.”

“My dear Mrs Smith, your authority is deficient. This will not do. Mr

Elliot’s having any views on me will not in the least account for the

efforts he made towards a reconciliation with my father. That was all

prior to my coming to Bath. I found them on the most friendly terms

when I arrived.”

“I know you did; I know it all perfectly, but—”

“Indeed, Mrs Smith, we must not expect to get real information in such

a line. Facts or opinions which are to pass through the hands of so

many, to be misconceived by folly in one, and ignorance in another, can

hardly have much truth left.”

“Only give me a hearing. You will soon be able to judge of the general

credit due, by listening to some particulars which you can yourself

immediately contradict or confirm. Nobody supposes that you were his

first inducement. He had seen you indeed, before he came to Bath, and

admired you, but without knowing it to be you. So says my historian, at

least. Is this true? Did he see you last summer or autumn, ‘somewhere

down in the west,’ to use her own words, without knowing it to be you?”

“He certainly did. So far it is very true. At Lyme. I happened to be at

Lyme.”

“Well,” continued Mrs Smith, triumphantly, “grant my friend the credit

due to the establishment of the first point asserted. He saw you then

at Lyme, and liked you so well as to be exceedingly pleased to meet

with you again in Camden Place, as Miss Anne Elliot, and from that

moment, I have no doubt, had a double motive in his visits there. But

there was another, and an earlier, which I will now explain. If there

is anything in my story which you know to be either false or

improbable, stop me. My account states, that your sister’s friend, the

lady now staying with you, whom I have heard you mention, came to Bath

with Miss Elliot and Sir Walter as long ago as September (in short when

they first came themselves), and has been staying there ever since;

that she is a clever, insinuating, handsome woman, poor and plausible,

and altogether such in situation and manner, as to give a general idea,

among Sir Walter’s acquaintance, of her meaning to be Lady Elliot, and

as general a surprise that Miss Elliot should be apparently, blind to

the danger.”

Here Mrs Smith paused a moment; but Anne had not a word to say, and she

continued—

“This was the light in which it appeared to those who knew the family,

long before you returned to it; and Colonel Wallis had his eye upon

your father enough to be sensible of it, though he did not then visit

in Camden Place; but his regard for Mr Elliot gave him an interest in

watching all that was going on there, and when Mr Elliot came to Bath

for a day or two, as he happened to do a little before Christmas,

Colonel Wallis made him acquainted with the appearance of things, and

the reports beginning to prevail. Now you are to understand, that time

had worked a very material change in Mr Elliot’s opinions as to the

value of a baronetcy. Upon all points of blood and connexion he is a

completely altered man. Having long had as much money as he could

spend, nothing to wish for on the side of avarice or indulgence, he has

been gradually learning to pin his happiness upon the consequence he is

heir to. I thought it coming on before our acquaintance ceased, but it

is now a confirmed feeling. He cannot bear the idea of not being Sir

William. You may guess, therefore, that the news he heard from his

friend could not be very agreeable, and you may guess what it produced;

the resolution of coming back to Bath as soon as possible, and of

fixing himself here for a time, with the view of renewing his former

acquaintance, and recovering such a footing in the family as might give

him the means of ascertaining the degree of his danger, and of

circumventing the lady if he found it material. This was agreed upon

between the two friends as the only thing to be done; and Colonel

Wallis was to assist in every way that he could. He was to be

introduced, and Mrs Wallis was to be introduced, and everybody was to

be introduced. Mr Elliot came back accordingly; and on application was

forgiven, as you know, and re-admitted into the family; and there it

was his constant object, and his only object (till your arrival added

another motive), to watch Sir Walter and Mrs Clay. He omitted no

opportunity of being with them, threw himself in their way, called at

all hours; but I need not be particular on this subject. You can

imagine what an artful man would do; and with this guide, perhaps, may

recollect what you have seen him do.”

“Yes,” said Anne, “you tell me nothing which does not accord with what

I have known, or could imagine. There is always something offensive in

the details of cunning. The manœuvres of selfishness and duplicity must

ever be revolting, but I have heard nothing which really surprises me.

I know those who would be shocked by such a representation of Mr

Elliot, who would have difficulty in believing it; but I have never

been satisfied. I have always wanted some other motive for his conduct

than appeared. I should like to know his present opinion, as to the

probability of the event he has been in dread of; whether he considers

the danger to be lessening or not.”

“Lessening, I understand,” replied Mrs Smith. “He thinks Mrs Clay

afraid of him, aware that he sees through her, and not daring to

proceed as she might do in his absence. But since he must be absent

some time or other, I do not perceive how he can ever be secure while

she holds her present influence. Mrs Wallis has an amusing idea, as

nurse tells me, that it is to be put into the marriage articles when

you and Mr Elliot marry, that your father is not to marry Mrs Clay. A

scheme, worthy of Mrs Wallis’s understanding, by all accounts; but my

sensible nurse Rooke sees the absurdity of it. ‘Why, to be sure,

ma’am,’ said she, ‘it would not prevent his marrying anybody else.’

And, indeed, to own the truth, I do not think nurse, in her heart, is a

very strenuous opposer of Sir Walter’s making a second match. She must

be allowed to be a favourer of matrimony, you know; and (since self

will intrude) who can say that she may not have some flying visions of

attending the next Lady Elliot, through Mrs Wallis’s recommendation?”

“I am very glad to know all this,” said Anne, after a little

thoughtfulness. “It will be more painful to me in some respects to be

in company with him, but I shall know better what to do. My line of

conduct will be more direct. Mr Elliot is evidently a disingenuous,

artificial, worldly man, who has never had any better principle to

guide him than selfishness.”

But Mr Elliot was not done with. Mrs Smith had been carried away from

her first direction, and Anne had forgotten, in the interest of her own

family concerns, how much had been originally implied against him; but

her attention was now called to the explanation of those first hints,

and she listened to a recital which, if it did not perfectly justify

the unqualified bitterness of Mrs Smith, proved him to have been very

unfeeling in his conduct towards her; very deficient both in justice

and compassion.

She learned that (the intimacy between them continuing unimpaired by Mr

Elliot’s marriage) they had been as before always together, and Mr

Elliot had led his friend into expenses much beyond his fortune. Mrs

Smith did not want to take blame to herself, and was most tender of

throwing any on her husband; but Anne could collect that their income

had never been equal to their style of living, and that from the first

there had been a great deal of general and joint extravagance. From his

wife’s account of him she could discern Mr Smith to have been a man of

warm feelings, easy temper, careless habits, and not strong

understanding, much more amiable than his friend, and very unlike him,

led by him, and probably despised by him. Mr Elliot, raised by his

marriage to great affluence, and disposed to every gratification of

pleasure and vanity which could be commanded without involving himself,

(for with all his self-indulgence he had become a prudent man), and

beginning to be rich, just as his friend ought to have found himself to

be poor, seemed to have had no concern at all for that friend’s

probable finances, but, on the contrary, had been prompting and

encouraging expenses which could end only in ruin; and the Smiths

accordingly had been ruined.

The husband had died just in time to be spared the full knowledge of

it. They had previously known embarrassments enough to try the

friendship of their friends, and to prove that Mr Elliot’s had better

not be tried; but it was not till his death that the wretched state of

his affairs was fully known. With a confidence in Mr Elliot’s regard,

more creditable to his feelings than his judgement, Mr Smith had

appointed him the executor of his will; but Mr Elliot would not act,

and the difficulties and distress which this refusal had heaped on her,

in addition to the inevitable sufferings of her situation, had been

such as could not be related without anguish of spirit, or listened to

without corresponding indignation.

Anne was shewn some letters of his on the occasion, answers to urgent

applications from Mrs Smith, which all breathed the same stern

resolution of not engaging in a fruitless trouble, and, under a cold

civility, the same hard-hearted indifference to any of the evils it

might bring on her. It was a dreadful picture of ingratitude and

inhumanity; and Anne felt, at some moments, that no flagrant open crime

could have been worse. She had a great deal to listen to; all the

particulars of past sad scenes, all the minutiae of distress upon

distress, which in former conversations had been merely hinted at, were

dwelt on now with a natural indulgence. Anne could perfectly comprehend

the exquisite relief, and was only the more inclined to wonder at the

composure of her friend’s usual state of mind.

There was one circumstance in the history of her grievances of

particular irritation. She had good reason to believe that some

property of her husband in the West Indies, which had been for many

years under a sort of sequestration for the payment of its own

incumbrances, might be recoverable by proper measures; and this

property, though not large, would be enough to make her comparatively

rich. But there was nobody to stir in it. Mr Elliot would do nothing,

and she could do nothing herself, equally disabled from personal

exertion by her state of bodily weakness, and from employing others by

her want of money. She had no natural connexions to assist her even

with their counsel, and she could not afford to purchase the assistance

of the law. This was a cruel aggravation of actually straitened means.

To feel that she ought to be in better circumstances, that a little

trouble in the right place might do it, and to fear that delay might be

even weakening her claims, was hard to bear.

It was on this point that she had hoped to engage Anne’s good offices

with Mr Elliot. She had previously, in the anticipation of their

marriage, been very apprehensive of losing her friend by it; but on

being assured that he could have made no attempt of that nature, since

he did not even know her to be in Bath, it immediately occurred, that

something might be done in her favour by the influence of the woman he

loved, and she had been hastily preparing to interest Anne’s feelings,

as far as the observances due to Mr Elliot’s character would allow,

when Anne’s refutation of the supposed engagement changed the face of

everything; and while it took from her the new-formed hope of

succeeding in the object of her first anxiety, left her at least the

comfort of telling the whole story her own way.

After listening to this full description of Mr Elliot, Anne could not

but express some surprise at Mrs Smith’s having spoken of him so

favourably in the beginning of their conversation. “She had seemed to

recommend and praise him!”

“My dear,” was Mrs Smith’s reply, “there was nothing else to be done. I

considered your marrying him as certain, though he might not yet have

made the offer, and I could no more speak the truth of him, than if he

had been your husband. My heart bled for you, as I talked of happiness;

and yet he is sensible, he is agreeable, and with such a woman as you,

it was not absolutely hopeless. He was very unkind to his first wife.

They were wretched together. But she was too ignorant and giddy for

respect, and he had never loved her. I was willing to hope that you

must fare better.”

Anne could just acknowledge within herself such a possibility of having

been induced to marry him, as made her shudder at the idea of the

misery which must have followed. It was just possible that she might

have been persuaded by Lady Russell! And under such a supposition,

which would have been most miserable, when time had disclosed all, too

late?

It was very desirable that Lady Russell should be no longer deceived;

and one of the concluding arrangements of this important conference,

which carried them through the greater part of the morning, was, that

Anne had full liberty to communicate to her friend everything relative

to Mrs Smith, in which his conduct was involved.

CHAPTER XXII.

Anne went home to think over all that she had heard. In one point, her

feelings were relieved by this knowledge of Mr Elliot. There was no

longer anything of tenderness due to him. He stood as opposed to

Captain Wentworth, in all his own unwelcome obtrusiveness; and the evil

of his attentions last night, the irremediable mischief he might have

done, was considered with sensations unqualified, unperplexed. Pity for

him was all over. But this was the only point of relief. In every other

respect, in looking around her, or penetrating forward, she saw more to

distrust and to apprehend. She was concerned for the disappointment and

pain Lady Russell would be feeling; for the mortifications which must

be hanging over her father and sister, and had all the distress of

foreseeing many evils, without knowing how to avert any one of them.

She was most thankful for her own knowledge of him. She had never

considered herself as entitled to reward for not slighting an old

friend like Mrs Smith, but here was a reward indeed springing from it!

Mrs Smith had been able to tell her what no one else could have done.

Could the knowledge have been extended through her family? But this was

a vain idea. She must talk to Lady Russell, tell her, consult with her,

and having done her best, wait the event with as much composure as

possible; and after all, her greatest want of composure would be in

that quarter of the mind which could not be opened to Lady Russell; in

that flow of anxieties and fears which must be all to herself.

She found, on reaching home, that she had, as she intended, escaped

seeing Mr Elliot; that he had called and paid them a long morning

visit; but hardly had she congratulated herself, and felt safe, when

she heard that he was coming again in the evening.

“I had not the smallest intention of asking him,” said Elizabeth, with

affected carelessness, “but he gave so many hints; so Mrs Clay says, at

least.”

“Indeed, I do say it. I never saw anybody in my life spell harder for

an invitation. Poor man! I was really in pain for him; for your

hard-hearted sister, Miss Anne, seems bent on cruelty.”

“Oh!” cried Elizabeth, “I have been rather too much used to the game to

be soon overcome by a gentleman’s hints. However, when I found how

excessively he was regretting that he should miss my father this

morning, I gave way immediately, for I would never really omit an

opportunity of bringing him and Sir Walter together. They appear to so

much advantage in company with each other. Each behaving so pleasantly.

Mr Elliot looking up with so much respect.”

“Quite delightful!” cried Mrs Clay, not daring, however, to turn her

eyes towards Anne. “Exactly like father and son! Dear Miss Elliot, may

I not say father and son?”

“Oh! I lay no embargo on any body’s words. If you will have such ideas!

But, upon my word, I am scarcely sensible of his attentions being

beyond those of other men.”

“My dear Miss Elliot!” exclaimed Mrs Clay, lifting her hands and eyes,

and sinking all the rest of her astonishment in a convenient silence.

“Well, my dear Penelope, you need not be so alarmed about him. I did

invite him, you know. I sent him away with smiles. When I found he was

really going to his friends at Thornberry Park for the whole day

to-morrow, I had compassion on him.”

Anne admired the good acting of the friend, in being able to shew such

pleasure as she did, in the expectation and in the actual arrival of

the very person whose presence must really be interfering with her

prime object. It was impossible but that Mrs Clay must hate the sight

of Mr Elliot; and yet she could assume a most obliging, placid look,

and appear quite satisfied with the curtailed license of devoting

herself only half as much to Sir Walter as she would have done

otherwise.

To Anne herself it was most distressing to see Mr Elliot enter the

room; and quite painful to have him approach and speak to her. She had

been used before to feel that he could not be always quite sincere, but

now she saw insincerity in everything. His attentive deference to her

father, contrasted with his former language, was odious; and when she

thought of his cruel conduct towards Mrs Smith, she could hardly bear

the sight of his present smiles and mildness, or the sound of his

artificial good sentiments.

She meant to avoid any such alteration of manners as might provoke a

remonstrance on his side. It was a great object to her to escape all

enquiry or eclat; but it was her intention to be as decidedly cool to

him as might be compatible with their relationship; and to retrace, as

quietly as she could, the few steps of unnecessary intimacy she had

been gradually led along. She was accordingly more guarded, and more

cool, than she had been the night before.

He wanted to animate her curiosity again as to how and where he could

have heard her formerly praised; wanted very much to be gratified by

more solicitation; but the charm was broken: he found that the heat and

animation of a public room was necessary to kindle his modest cousin’s

vanity; he found, at least, that it was not to be done now, by any of

those attempts which he could hazard among the too-commanding claims of

the others. He little surmised that it was a subject acting now exactly

against his interest, bringing immediately to her thoughts all those

parts of his conduct which were least excusable.

She had some satisfaction in finding that he was really going out of

Bath the next morning, going early, and that he would be gone the

greater part of two days. He was invited again to Camden Place the very

evening of his return; but from Thursday to Saturday evening his

absence was certain. It was bad enough that a Mrs Clay should be always

before her; but that a deeper hypocrite should be added to their party,

seemed the destruction of everything like peace and comfort. It was so

humiliating to reflect on the constant deception practised on her

father and Elizabeth; to consider the various sources of mortification

preparing for them! Mrs Clay’s selfishness was not so complicate nor so

revolting as his; and Anne would have compounded for the marriage at

once, with all its evils, to be clear of Mr Elliot’s subtleties in

endeavouring to prevent it.

On Friday morning she meant to go very early to Lady Russell, and

accomplish the necessary communication; and she would have gone

directly after breakfast, but that Mrs Clay was also going out on some

obliging purpose of saving her sister trouble, which determined her to

wait till she might be safe from such a companion. She saw Mrs Clay

fairly off, therefore, before she began to talk of spending the morning

in Rivers Street.

“Very well,” said Elizabeth, “I have nothing to send but my love. Oh!

you may as well take back that tiresome book she would lend me, and

pretend I have read it through. I really cannot be plaguing myself for

ever with all the new poems and states of the nation that come out.

Lady Russell quite bores one with her new publications. You need not

tell her so, but I thought her dress hideous the other night. I used to

think she had some taste in dress, but I was ashamed of her at the

concert. Something so formal and \_arrangé\_ in her air! and she sits so

upright! My best love, of course.”

“And mine,” added Sir Walter. “Kindest regards. And you may say, that I

mean to call upon her soon. Make a civil message; but I shall only

leave my card. Morning visits are never fair by women at her time of

life, who make themselves up so little. If she would only wear rouge

she would not be afraid of being seen; but last time I called, I

observed the blinds were let down immediately.”

While her father spoke, there was a knock at the door. Who could it be?

Anne, remembering the preconcerted visits, at all hours, of Mr Elliot,

would have expected him, but for his known engagement seven miles off.

After the usual period of suspense, the usual sounds of approach were

heard, and “Mr and Mrs Charles Musgrove” were ushered into the room.

Surprise was the strongest emotion raised by their appearance; but Anne

was really glad to see them; and the others were not so sorry but that

they could put on a decent air of welcome; and as soon as it became

clear that these, their nearest relations, were not arrived with any

views of accommodation in that house, Sir Walter and Elizabeth were

able to rise in cordiality, and do the honours of it very well. They

were come to Bath for a few days with Mrs Musgrove, and were at the

White Hart. So much was pretty soon understood; but till Sir Walter and

Elizabeth were walking Mary into the other drawing-room, and regaling

themselves with her admiration, Anne could not draw upon Charles’s

brain for a regular history of their coming, or an explanation of some

smiling hints of particular business, which had been ostentatiously

dropped by Mary, as well as of some apparent confusion as to whom their

party consisted of.

She then found that it consisted of Mrs Musgrove, Henrietta, and

Captain Harville, beside their two selves. He gave her a very plain,

intelligible account of the whole; a narration in which she saw a great

deal of most characteristic proceeding. The scheme had received its

first impulse by Captain Harville’s wanting to come to Bath on

business. He had begun to talk of it a week ago; and by way of doing

something, as shooting was over, Charles had proposed coming with him,

and Mrs Harville had seemed to like the idea of it very much, as an

advantage to her husband; but Mary could not bear to be left, and had

made herself so unhappy about it, that for a day or two everything

seemed to be in suspense, or at an end. But then, it had been taken up

by his father and mother. His mother had some old friends in Bath whom

she wanted to see; it was thought a good opportunity for Henrietta to

come and buy wedding-clothes for herself and her sister; and, in short,

it ended in being his mother’s party, that everything might be

comfortable and easy to Captain Harville; and he and Mary were included

in it by way of general convenience. They had arrived late the night

before. Mrs Harville, her children, and Captain Benwick, remained with

Mr Musgrove and Louisa at Uppercross.

Anne’s only surprise was, that affairs should be in forwardness enough

for Henrietta’s wedding-clothes to be talked of. She had imagined such

difficulties of fortune to exist there as must prevent the marriage

from being near at hand; but she learned from Charles that, very

recently, (since Mary’s last letter to herself), Charles Hayter had

been applied to by a friend to hold a living for a youth who could not

possibly claim it under many years; and that on the strength of his

present income, with almost a certainty of something more permanent

long before the term in question, the two families had consented to the

young people’s wishes, and that their marriage was likely to take place

in a few months, quite as soon as Louisa’s. “And a very good living it

was,” Charles added: “only five-and-twenty miles from Uppercross, and

in a very fine country: fine part of Dorsetshire. In the centre of some

of the best preserves in the kingdom, surrounded by three great

proprietors, each more careful and jealous than the other; and to two

of the three at least, Charles Hayter might get a special

recommendation. Not that he will value it as he ought,” he observed,

“Charles is too cool about sporting. That’s the worst of him.”

“I am extremely glad, indeed,” cried Anne, “particularly glad that this

should happen; and that of two sisters, who both deserve equally well,

and who have always been such good friends, the pleasant prospect of

one should not be dimming those of the other—that they should be so

equal in their prosperity and comfort. I hope your father and mother

are quite happy with regard to both.”

“Oh! yes. My father would be well pleased if the gentlemen were richer,

but he has no other fault to find. Money, you know, coming down with

money—two daughters at once—it cannot be a very agreeable operation,

and it streightens him as to many things. However, I do not mean to say

they have not a right to it. It is very fit they should have daughters’

shares; and I am sure he has always been a very kind, liberal father to

me. Mary does not above half like Henrietta’s match. She never did, you

know. But she does not do him justice, nor think enough about Winthrop.

I cannot make her attend to the value of the property. It is a very

fair match, as times go; and I have liked Charles Hayter all my life,

and I shall not leave off now.”

“Such excellent parents as Mr and Mrs Musgrove,” exclaimed Anne,

“should be happy in their children’s marriages. They do everything to

confer happiness, I am sure. What a blessing to young people to be in

such hands! Your father and mother seem so totally free from all those

ambitious feelings which have led to so much misconduct and misery,

both in young and old. I hope you think Louisa perfectly recovered

now?”

He answered rather hesitatingly, “Yes, I believe I do; very much

recovered; but she is altered; there is no running or jumping about, no

laughing or dancing; it is quite different. If one happens only to shut

the door a little hard, she starts and wriggles like a young dab-chick

in the water; and Benwick sits at her elbow, reading verses, or

whispering to her, all day long.”

Anne could not help laughing. “That cannot be much to your taste, I

know,” said she; “but I do believe him to be an excellent young man.”

“To be sure he is. Nobody doubts it; and I hope you do not think I am

so illiberal as to want every man to have the same objects and

pleasures as myself. I have a great value for Benwick; and when one can

but get him to talk, he has plenty to say. His reading has done him no

harm, for he has fought as well as read. He is a brave fellow. I got

more acquainted with him last Monday than ever I did before. We had a

famous set-to at rat-hunting all the morning in my father’s great

barns; and he played his part so well that I have liked him the better

ever since.”

Here they were interrupted by the absolute necessity of Charles’s

following the others to admire mirrors and china; but Anne had heard

enough to understand the present state of Uppercross, and rejoice in

its happiness; and though she sighed as she rejoiced, her sigh had none

of the ill-will of envy in it. She would certainly have risen to their

blessings if she could, but she did not want to lessen theirs.

The visit passed off altogether in high good humour. Mary was in

excellent spirits, enjoying the gaiety and the change, and so well

satisfied with the journey in her mother-in-law’s carriage with four

horses, and with her own complete independence of Camden Place, that

she was exactly in a temper to admire everything as she ought, and

enter most readily into all the superiorities of the house, as they

were detailed to her. She had no demands on her father or sister, and

her consequence was just enough increased by their handsome

drawing-rooms.

Elizabeth was, for a short time, suffering a good deal. She felt that

Mrs Musgrove and all her party ought to be asked to dine with them; but

she could not bear to have the difference of style, the reduction of

servants, which a dinner must betray, witnessed by those who had been

always so inferior to the Elliots of Kellynch. It was a struggle

between propriety and vanity; but vanity got the better, and then

Elizabeth was happy again. These were her internal persuasions: “Old

fashioned notions; country hospitality; we do not profess to give

dinners; few people in Bath do; Lady Alicia never does; did not even

ask her own sister’s family, though they were here a month: and I dare

say it would be very inconvenient to Mrs Musgrove; put her quite out of

her way. I am sure she would rather not come; she cannot feel easy with

us. I will ask them all for an evening; that will be much better; that

will be a novelty and a treat. They have not seen two such drawing

rooms before. They will be delighted to come to-morrow evening. It

shall be a regular party, small, but most elegant.” And this satisfied

Elizabeth: and when the invitation was given to the two present, and

promised for the absent, Mary was as completely satisfied. She was

particularly asked to meet Mr Elliot, and be introduced to Lady

Dalrymple and Miss Carteret, who were fortunately already engaged to

come; and she could not have received a more gratifying attention. Miss

Elliot was to have the honour of calling on Mrs Musgrove in the course

of the morning; and Anne walked off with Charles and Mary, to go and

see her and Henrietta directly.

Her plan of sitting with Lady Russell must give way for the present.

They all three called in Rivers Street for a couple of minutes; but

Anne convinced herself that a day’s delay of the intended communication

could be of no consequence, and hastened forward to the White Hart, to

see again the friends and companions of the last autumn, with an

eagerness of good-will which many associations contributed to form.

They found Mrs Musgrove and her daughter within, and by themselves, and

Anne had the kindest welcome from each. Henrietta was exactly in that

state of recently-improved views, of fresh-formed happiness, which made

her full of regard and interest for everybody she had ever liked before

at all; and Mrs Musgrove’s real affection had been won by her

usefulness when they were in distress. It was a heartiness, and a

warmth, and a sincerity which Anne delighted in the more, from the sad

want of such blessings at home. She was entreated to give them as much

of her time as possible, invited for every day and all day long, or

rather claimed as part of the family; and, in return, she naturally

fell into all her wonted ways of attention and assistance, and on

Charles’s leaving them together, was listening to Mrs Musgrove’s

history of Louisa, and to Henrietta’s of herself, giving opinions on

business, and recommendations to shops; with intervals of every help

which Mary required, from altering her ribbon to settling her accounts;

from finding her keys, and assorting her trinkets, to trying to

convince her that she was not ill-used by anybody; which Mary, well

amused as she generally was, in her station at a window overlooking the

entrance to the Pump Room, could not but have her moments of imagining.

A morning of thorough confusion was to be expected. A large party in an

hotel ensured a quick-changing, unsettled scene. One five minutes

brought a note, the next a parcel; and Anne had not been there half an

hour, when their dining-room, spacious as it was, seemed more than half

filled: a party of steady old friends were seated around Mrs Musgrove,

and Charles came back with Captains Harville and Wentworth. The

appearance of the latter could not be more than the surprise of the

moment. It was impossible for her to have forgotten to feel that this

arrival of their common friends must be soon bringing them together

again. Their last meeting had been most important in opening his

feelings; she had derived from it a delightful conviction; but she

feared from his looks, that the same unfortunate persuasion, which had

hastened him away from the Concert Room, still governed. He did not

seem to want to be near enough for conversation.

She tried to be calm, and leave things to take their course, and tried

to dwell much on this argument of rational dependence:—“Surely, if

there be constant attachment on each side, our hearts must understand

each other ere long. We are not boy and girl, to be captiously

irritable, misled by every moment’s inadvertence, and wantonly playing

with our own happiness.” And yet, a few minutes afterwards, she felt as

if their being in company with each other, under their present

circumstances, could only be exposing them to inadvertencies and

misconstructions of the most mischievous kind.

“Anne,” cried Mary, still at her window, “there is Mrs Clay, I am sure,

standing under the colonnade, and a gentleman with her. I saw them turn

the corner from Bath Street just now. They seemed deep in talk. Who is

it? Come, and tell me. Good heavens! I recollect. It is Mr Elliot

himself.”

“No,” cried Anne, quickly, “it cannot be Mr Elliot, I assure you. He

was to leave Bath at nine this morning, and does not come back till

to-morrow.”

As she spoke, she felt that Captain Wentworth was looking at her, the

consciousness of which vexed and embarrassed her, and made her regret

that she had said so much, simple as it was.

Mary, resenting that she should be supposed not to know her own cousin,

began talking very warmly about the family features, and protesting

still more positively that it was Mr Elliot, calling again upon Anne to

come and look for herself, but Anne did not mean to stir, and tried to

be cool and unconcerned. Her distress returned, however, on perceiving

smiles and intelligent glances pass between two or three of the lady

visitors, as if they believed themselves quite in the secret. It was

evident that the report concerning her had spread, and a short pause

succeeded, which seemed to ensure that it would now spread farther.

“Do come, Anne,” cried Mary, “come and look yourself. You will be too

late if you do not make haste. They are parting; they are shaking

hands. He is turning away. Not know Mr Elliot, indeed! You seem to have

forgot all about Lyme.”

To pacify Mary, and perhaps screen her own embarrassment, Anne did move

quietly to the window. She was just in time to ascertain that it really

was Mr Elliot, which she had never believed, before he disappeared on

one side, as Mrs Clay walked quickly off on the other; and checking the

surprise which she could not but feel at such an appearance of friendly

conference between two persons of totally opposite interest, she calmly

said, “Yes, it is Mr Elliot, certainly. He has changed his hour of

going, I suppose, that is all, or I may be mistaken, I might not

attend;” and walked back to her chair, recomposed, and with the

comfortable hope of having acquitted herself well.

The visitors took their leave; and Charles, having civilly seen them

off, and then made a face at them, and abused them for coming, began

with—

“Well, mother, I have done something for you that you will like. I have

been to the theatre, and secured a box for to-morrow night. A’n’t I a

good boy? I know you love a play; and there is room for us all. It

holds nine. I have engaged Captain Wentworth. Anne will not be sorry to

join us, I am sure. We all like a play. Have not I done well, mother?”

Mrs Musgrove was good humouredly beginning to express her perfect

readiness for the play, if Henrietta and all the others liked it, when

Mary eagerly interrupted her by exclaiming—

“Good heavens, Charles! how can you think of such a thing? Take a box

for to-morrow night! Have you forgot that we are engaged to Camden

Place to-morrow night? and that we were most particularly asked to meet

Lady Dalrymple and her daughter, and Mr Elliot, and all the principal

family connexions, on purpose to be introduced to them? How can you be

so forgetful?”

“Phoo! phoo!” replied Charles, “what’s an evening party? Never worth

remembering. Your father might have asked us to dinner, I think, if he

had wanted to see us. You may do as you like, but I shall go to the

play.”

“Oh! Charles, I declare it will be too abominable if you do, when you

promised to go.”

“No, I did not promise. I only smirked and bowed, and said the word

‘happy.’ There was no promise.”

“But you must go, Charles. It would be unpardonable to fail. We were

asked on purpose to be introduced. There was always such a great

connexion between the Dalrymples and ourselves. Nothing ever happened

on either side that was not announced immediately. We are quite near

relations, you know; and Mr Elliot too, whom you ought so particularly

to be acquainted with! Every attention is due to Mr Elliot. Consider,

my father’s heir: the future representative of the family.”

“Don’t talk to me about heirs and representatives,” cried Charles. “I

am not one of those who neglect the reigning power to bow to the rising

sun. If I would not go for the sake of your father, I should think it

scandalous to go for the sake of his heir. What is Mr Elliot to me?”

The careless expression was life to Anne, who saw that Captain

Wentworth was all attention, looking and listening with his whole soul;

and that the last words brought his enquiring eyes from Charles to

herself.

Charles and Mary still talked on in the same style; he, half serious

and half jesting, maintaining the scheme for the play, and she,

invariably serious, most warmly opposing it, and not omitting to make

it known that, however determined to go to Camden Place herself, she

should not think herself very well used, if they went to the play

without her. Mrs Musgrove interposed.

“We had better put it off. Charles, you had much better go back and

change the box for Tuesday. It would be a pity to be divided, and we

should be losing Miss Anne, too, if there is a party at her father’s;

and I am sure neither Henrietta nor I should care at all for the play,

if Miss Anne could not be with us.”

Anne felt truly obliged to her for such kindness; and quite as much so

for the opportunity it gave her of decidedly saying—

“If it depended only on my inclination, ma’am, the party at home

(excepting on Mary’s account) would not be the smallest impediment. I

have no pleasure in the sort of meeting, and should be too happy to

change it for a play, and with you. But, it had better not be

attempted, perhaps.” She had spoken it; but she trembled when it was

done, conscious that her words were listened to, and daring not even to

try to observe their effect.

It was soon generally agreed that Tuesday should be the day; Charles

only reserving the advantage of still teasing his wife, by persisting

that he would go to the play to-morrow if nobody else would.

Captain Wentworth left his seat, and walked to the fire-place; probably

for the sake of walking away from it soon afterwards, and taking a

station, with less bare-faced design, by Anne.

“You have not been long enough in Bath,” said he, “to enjoy the evening

parties of the place.”

“Oh! no. The usual character of them has nothing for me. I am no

card-player.”

“You were not formerly, I know. You did not use to like cards; but time

makes many changes.”

“I am not yet so much changed,” cried Anne, and stopped, fearing she

hardly knew what misconstruction. After waiting a few moments he said,

and as if it were the result of immediate feeling, “It is a period,

indeed! Eight years and a half is a period.”

Whether he would have proceeded farther was left to Anne’s imagination

to ponder over in a calmer hour; for while still hearing the sounds he

had uttered, she was startled to other subjects by Henrietta, eager to

make use of the present leisure for getting out, and calling on her

companions to lose no time, lest somebody else should come in.

They were obliged to move. Anne talked of being perfectly ready, and

tried to look it; but she felt that could Henrietta have known the

regret and reluctance of her heart in quitting that chair, in preparing

to quit the room, she would have found, in all her own sensations for

her cousin, in the very security of his affection, wherewith to pity

her.

Their preparations, however, were stopped short. Alarming sounds were

heard; other visitors approached, and the door was thrown open for Sir

Walter and Miss Elliot, whose entrance seemed to give a general chill.

Anne felt an instant oppression, and wherever she looked saw symptoms

of the same. The comfort, the freedom, the gaiety of the room was over,

hushed into cold composure, determined silence, or insipid talk, to

meet the heartless elegance of her father and sister. How mortifying to

feel that it was so!

Her jealous eye was satisfied in one particular. Captain Wentworth was

acknowledged again by each, by Elizabeth more graciously than before.

She even addressed him once, and looked at him more than once.

Elizabeth was, in fact, revolving a great measure. The sequel explained

it. After the waste of a few minutes in saying the proper nothings, she

began to give the invitation which was to comprise all the remaining

dues of the Musgroves. “To-morrow evening, to meet a few friends: no

formal party.” It was all said very gracefully, and the cards with

which she had provided herself, the “Miss Elliot at home,” were laid on

the table, with a courteous, comprehensive smile to all, and one smile

and one card more decidedly for Captain Wentworth. The truth was, that

Elizabeth had been long enough in Bath to understand the importance of

a man of such an air and appearance as his. The past was nothing. The

present was that Captain Wentworth would move about well in her

drawing-room. The card was pointedly given, and Sir Walter and

Elizabeth arose and disappeared.

The interruption had been short, though severe, and ease and animation

returned to most of those they left as the door shut them out, but not

to Anne. She could think only of the invitation she had with such

astonishment witnessed, and of the manner in which it had been

received; a manner of doubtful meaning, of surprise rather than

gratification, of polite acknowledgement rather than acceptance. She

knew him; she saw disdain in his eye, and could not venture to believe

that he had determined to accept such an offering, as an atonement for

all the insolence of the past. Her spirits sank. He held the card in

his hand after they were gone, as if deeply considering it.

“Only think of Elizabeth’s including everybody!” whispered Mary very

audibly. “I do not wonder Captain Wentworth is delighted! You see he

cannot put the card out of his hand.”

Anne caught his eye, saw his cheeks glow, and his mouth form itself

into a momentary expression of contempt, and turned away, that she

might neither see nor hear more to vex her.

The party separated. The gentlemen had their own pursuits, the ladies

proceeded on their own business, and they met no more while Anne

belonged to them. She was earnestly begged to return and dine, and give

them all the rest of the day, but her spirits had been so long exerted

that at present she felt unequal to more, and fit only for home, where

she might be sure of being as silent as she chose.

Promising to be with them the whole of the following morning,

therefore, she closed the fatigues of the present by a toilsome walk to

Camden Place, there to spend the evening chiefly in listening to the

busy arrangements of Elizabeth and Mrs Clay for the morrow’s party, the

frequent enumeration of the persons invited, and the continually

improving detail of all the embellishments which were to make it the

most completely elegant of its kind in Bath, while harassing herself

with the never-ending question, of whether Captain Wentworth would come

or not? They were reckoning him as certain, but with her it was a

gnawing solicitude never appeased for five minutes together. She

generally thought he would come, because she generally thought he

ought; but it was a case which she could not so shape into any positive

act of duty or discretion, as inevitably to defy the suggestions of

very opposite feelings.

She only roused herself from the broodings of this restless agitation,

to let Mrs Clay know that she had been seen with Mr Elliot three hours

after his being supposed to be out of Bath, for having watched in vain

for some intimation of the interview from the lady herself, she

determined to mention it, and it seemed to her there was guilt in Mrs

Clay’s face as she listened. It was transient: cleared away in an

instant; but Anne could imagine she read there the consciousness of

having, by some complication of mutual trick, or some overbearing

authority of his, been obliged to attend (perhaps for half an hour) to

his lectures and restrictions on her designs on Sir Walter. She

exclaimed, however, with a very tolerable imitation of nature:—

“Oh! dear! very true. Only think, Miss Elliot, to my great surprise I

met with Mr Elliot in Bath Street. I was never more astonished. He

turned back and walked with me to the Pump Yard. He had been prevented

setting off for Thornberry, but I really forget by what; for I was in a

hurry, and could not much attend, and I can only answer for his being

determined not to be delayed in his return. He wanted to know how early

he might be admitted to-morrow. He was full of ‘to-morrow,’ and it is

very evident that I have been full of it too, ever since I entered the

house, and learnt the extension of your plan and all that had happened,

or my seeing him could never have gone so entirely out of my head.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

One day only had passed since Anne’s conversation with Mrs Smith; but a

keener interest had succeeded, and she was now so little touched by Mr

Elliot’s conduct, except by its effects in one quarter, that it became

a matter of course the next morning, still to defer her explanatory

visit in Rivers Street. She had promised to be with the Musgroves from

breakfast to dinner. Her faith was plighted, and Mr Elliot’s character,

like the Sultaness Scheherazade’s head, must live another day.

She could not keep her appointment punctually, however; the weather was

unfavourable, and she had grieved over the rain on her friends’

account, and felt it very much on her own, before she was able to

attempt the walk. When she reached the White Hart, and made her way to

the proper apartment, she found herself neither arriving quite in time,

nor the first to arrive. The party before her were, Mrs Musgrove,

talking to Mrs Croft, and Captain Harville to Captain Wentworth; and

she immediately heard that Mary and Henrietta, too impatient to wait,

had gone out the moment it had cleared, but would be back again soon,

and that the strictest injunctions had been left with Mrs Musgrove to

keep her there till they returned. She had only to submit, sit down, be

outwardly composed, and feel herself plunged at once in all the

agitations which she had merely laid her account of tasting a little

before the morning closed. There was no delay, no waste of time. She

was deep in the happiness of such misery, or the misery of such

happiness, instantly. Two minutes after her entering the room, Captain

Wentworth said—

“We will write the letter we were talking of, Harville, now, if you

will give me materials.”

Materials were at hand, on a separate table; he went to it, and nearly

turning his back to them all, was engrossed by writing.

Mrs Musgrove was giving Mrs Croft the history of her eldest daughter’s

engagement, and just in that inconvenient tone of voice which was

perfectly audible while it pretended to be a whisper. Anne felt that

she did not belong to the conversation, and yet, as Captain Harville

seemed thoughtful and not disposed to talk, she could not avoid hearing

many undesirable particulars; such as, “how Mr Musgrove and my brother

Hayter had met again and again to talk it over; what my brother Hayter

had said one day, and what Mr Musgrove had proposed the next, and what

had occurred to my sister Hayter, and what the young people had wished,

and what I said at first I never could consent to, but was afterwards

persuaded to think might do very well,” and a great deal in the same

style of open-hearted communication: minutiae which, even with every

advantage of taste and delicacy, which good Mrs Musgrove could not

give, could be properly interesting only to the principals. Mrs Croft

was attending with great good-humour, and whenever she spoke at all, it

was very sensibly. Anne hoped the gentlemen might each be too much

self-occupied to hear.

“And so, ma’am, all these thing considered,” said Mrs Musgrove, in her

powerful whisper, “though we could have wished it different, yet,

altogether, we did not think it fair to stand out any longer, for

Charles Hayter was quite wild about it, and Henrietta was pretty near

as bad; and so we thought they had better marry at once, and make the

best of it, as many others have done before them. At any rate, said I,

it will be better than a long engagement.”

“That is precisely what I was going to observe,” cried Mrs Croft. “I

would rather have young people settle on a small income at once, and

have to struggle with a few difficulties together, than be involved in

a long engagement. I always think that no mutual—”

“Oh! dear Mrs Croft,” cried Mrs Musgrove, unable to let her finish her

speech, “there is nothing I so abominate for young people as a long

engagement. It is what I always protested against for my children. It

is all very well, I used to say, for young people to be engaged, if

there is a certainty of their being able to marry in six months, or

even in twelve; but a long engagement—”

“Yes, dear ma’am,” said Mrs Croft, “or an uncertain engagement, an

engagement which may be long. To begin without knowing that at such a

time there will be the means of marrying, I hold to be very unsafe and

unwise, and what I think all parents should prevent as far as they

can.”

Anne found an unexpected interest here. She felt its application to

herself, felt it in a nervous thrill all over her; and at the same

moment that her eyes instinctively glanced towards the distant table,

Captain Wentworth’s pen ceased to move, his head was raised, pausing,

listening, and he turned round the next instant to give a look, one

quick, conscious look at her.

The two ladies continued to talk, to re-urge the same admitted truths,

and enforce them with such examples of the ill effect of a contrary

practice as had fallen within their observation, but Anne heard nothing

distinctly; it was only a buzz of words in her ear, her mind was in

confusion.

Captain Harville, who had in truth been hearing none of it, now left

his seat, and moved to a window, and Anne seeming to watch him, though

it was from thorough absence of mind, became gradually sensible that he

was inviting her to join him where he stood. He looked at her with a

smile, and a little motion of the head, which expressed, “Come to me, I

have something to say;” and the unaffected, easy kindness of manner

which denoted the feelings of an older acquaintance than he really was,

strongly enforced the invitation. She roused herself and went to him.

The window at which he stood was at the other end of the room from

where the two ladies were sitting, and though nearer to Captain

Wentworth’s table, not very near. As she joined him, Captain Harville’s

countenance re-assumed the serious, thoughtful expression which seemed

its natural character.

“Look here,” said he, unfolding a parcel in his hand, and displaying a

small miniature painting, “do you know who that is?”

“Certainly: Captain Benwick.”

“Yes, and you may guess who it is for. But,” (in a deep tone), “it was

not done for her. Miss Elliot, do you remember our walking together at

Lyme, and grieving for him? I little thought then—but no matter. This

was drawn at the Cape. He met with a clever young German artist at the

Cape, and in compliance with a promise to my poor sister, sat to him,

and was bringing it home for her; and I have now the charge of getting

it properly set for another! It was a commission to me! But who else

was there to employ? I hope I can allow for him. I am not sorry,

indeed, to make it over to another. He undertakes it;” (looking towards

Captain Wentworth,) “he is writing about it now.” And with a quivering

lip he wound up the whole by adding, “Poor Fanny! she would not have

forgotten him so soon!”

“No,” replied Anne, in a low, feeling voice. “That I can easily

believe.”

“It was not in her nature. She doted on him.”

“It would not be the nature of any woman who truly loved.”

Captain Harville smiled, as much as to say, “Do you claim that for your

sex?” and she answered the question, smiling also, “Yes. We certainly

do not forget you as soon as you forget us. It is, perhaps, our fate

rather than our merit. We cannot help ourselves. We live at home,

quiet, confined, and our feelings prey upon us. You are forced on

exertion. You have always a profession, pursuits, business of some sort

or other, to take you back into the world immediately, and continual

occupation and change soon weaken impressions.”

“Granting your assertion that the world does all this so soon for men

(which, however, I do not think I shall grant), it does not apply to

Benwick. He has not been forced upon any exertion. The peace turned him

on shore at the very moment, and he has been living with us, in our

little family circle, ever since.”

“True,” said Anne, “very true; I did not recollect; but what shall we

say now, Captain Harville? If the change be not from outward

circumstances, it must be from within; it must be nature, man’s nature,

which has done the business for Captain Benwick.”

“No, no, it is not man’s nature. I will not allow it to be more man’s

nature than woman’s to be inconstant and forget those they do love, or

have loved. I believe the reverse. I believe in a true analogy between

our bodily frames and our mental; and that as our bodies are the

strongest, so are our feelings; capable of bearing most rough usage,

and riding out the heaviest weather.”

“Your feelings may be the strongest,” replied Anne, “but the same

spirit of analogy will authorise me to assert that ours are the most

tender. Man is more robust than woman, but he is not longer lived;

which exactly explains my view of the nature of their attachments. Nay,

it would be too hard upon you, if it were otherwise. You have

difficulties, and privations, and dangers enough to struggle with. You

are always labouring and toiling, exposed to every risk and hardship.

Your home, country, friends, all quitted. Neither time, nor health, nor

life, to be called your own. It would be hard, indeed” (with a

faltering voice), “if woman’s feelings were to be added to all this.”

“We shall never agree upon this question,” Captain Harville was

beginning to say, when a slight noise called their attention to Captain

Wentworth’s hitherto perfectly quiet division of the room. It was

nothing more than that his pen had fallen down; but Anne was startled

at finding him nearer than she had supposed, and half inclined to

suspect that the pen had only fallen because he had been occupied by

them, striving to catch sounds, which yet she did not think he could

have caught.

“Have you finished your letter?” said Captain Harville.

“Not quite, a few lines more. I shall have done in five minutes.”

“There is no hurry on my side. I am only ready whenever you are. I am

in very good anchorage here,” (smiling at Anne), “well supplied, and

want for nothing. No hurry for a signal at all. Well, Miss Elliot,”

(lowering his voice), “as I was saying, we shall never agree, I suppose,

upon this point. No man and woman would, probably. But let me observe

that all histories are against you—all stories, prose and verse. If I

had such a memory as Benwick, I could bring you fifty quotations in a

moment on my side the argument, and I do not think I ever opened a book

in my life which had not something to say upon woman’s inconstancy.

Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman’s fickleness. But perhaps you

will say, these were all written by men.”

“Perhaps I shall. Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in

books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story.

Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been

in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything.”

“But how shall we prove anything?”

“We never shall. We never can expect to prove any thing upon such a

point. It is a difference of opinion which does not admit of proof. We

each begin, probably, with a little bias towards our own sex; and upon

that bias build every circumstance in favour of it which has occurred

within our own circle; many of which circumstances (perhaps those very

cases which strike us the most) may be precisely such as cannot be

brought forward without betraying a confidence, or in some respect

saying what should not be said.”

“Ah!” cried Captain Harville, in a tone of strong feeling, “if I could

but make you comprehend what a man suffers when he takes a last look at

his wife and children, and watches the boat that he has sent them off

in, as long as it is in sight, and then turns away and says, ‘God knows

whether we ever meet again!’ And then, if I could convey to you the

glow of his soul when he does see them again; when, coming back after a

twelvemonth’s absence, perhaps, and obliged to put into another port,

he calculates how soon it be possible to get them there, pretending to

deceive himself, and saying, ‘They cannot be here till such a day,’ but

all the while hoping for them twelve hours sooner, and seeing them

arrive at last, as if Heaven had given them wings, by many hours sooner

still! If I could explain to you all this, and all that a man can bear

and do, and glories to do, for the sake of these treasures of his

existence! I speak, you know, only of such men as have hearts!”

pressing his own with emotion.

“Oh!” cried Anne eagerly, “I hope I do justice to all that is felt by

you, and by those who resemble you. God forbid that I should undervalue

the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures! I should

deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and

constancy were known only by woman. No, I believe you capable of

everything great and good in your married lives. I believe you equal to

every important exertion, and to every domestic forbearance, so long

as—if I may be allowed the expression—so long as you have an object. I

mean while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the

privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one; you

need not covet it), is that of loving longest, when existence or when

hope is gone.”

She could not immediately have uttered another sentence; her heart was

too full, her breath too much oppressed.

“You are a good soul,” cried Captain Harville, putting his hand on her

arm, quite affectionately. “There is no quarrelling with you. And when

I think of Benwick, my tongue is tied.”

Their attention was called towards the others. Mrs Croft was taking

leave.

“Here, Frederick, you and I part company, I believe,” said she. “I am

going home, and you have an engagement with your friend. To-night we

may have the pleasure of all meeting again at your party,” (turning to

Anne). “We had your sister’s card yesterday, and I understood Frederick

had a card too, though I did not see it; and you are disengaged,

Frederick, are you not, as well as ourselves?”

Captain Wentworth was folding up a letter in great haste, and either

could not or would not answer fully.

“Yes,” said he, “very true; here we separate, but Harville and I shall

soon be after you; that is, Harville, if you are ready, I am in half a

minute. I know you will not be sorry to be off. I shall be at your

service in half a minute.”

Mrs Croft left them, and Captain Wentworth, having sealed his letter

with great rapidity, was indeed ready, and had even a hurried, agitated

air, which shewed impatience to be gone. Anne knew not how to

understand it. She had the kindest “Good morning, God bless you!” from

Captain Harville, but from him not a word, nor a look! He had passed

out of the room without a look!

She had only time, however, to move closer to the table where he had

been writing, when footsteps were heard returning; the door opened, it

was himself. He begged their pardon, but he had forgotten his gloves,

and instantly crossing the room to the writing table, he drew out a

letter from under the scattered paper, placed it before Anne with eyes

of glowing entreaty fixed on her for a time, and hastily collecting his

gloves, was again out of the room, almost before Mrs Musgrove was aware

of his being in it: the work of an instant!

The revolution which one instant had made in Anne, was almost beyond

expression. The letter, with a direction hardly legible, to “Miss A.

E.—,” was evidently the one which he had been folding so hastily. While

supposed to be writing only to Captain Benwick, he had been also

addressing her! On the contents of that letter depended all which this

world could do for her. Anything was possible, anything might be defied

rather than suspense. Mrs Musgrove had little arrangements of her own

at her own table; to their protection she must trust, and sinking into

the chair which he had occupied, succeeding to the very spot where he

had leaned and written, her eyes devoured the following words:

“I can listen no longer in silence. I must speak to you by such means

as are within my reach. You pierce my soul. I am half agony, half hope.

Tell me not that I am too late, that such precious feelings are gone

for ever. I offer myself to you again with a heart even more your own

than when you almost broke it, eight years and a half ago. Dare not say

that man forgets sooner than woman, that his love has an earlier death.

I have loved none but you. Unjust I may have been, weak and resentful I

have been, but never inconstant. You alone have brought me to Bath. For

you alone, I think and plan. Have you not seen this? Can you fail to

have understood my wishes? I had not waited even these ten days, could

I have read your feelings, as I think you must have penetrated mine. I

can hardly write. I am every instant hearing something which overpowers

me. You sink your voice, but I can distinguish the tones of that voice

when they would be lost on others. Too good, too excellent creature!

You do us justice, indeed. You do believe that there is true attachment

and constancy among men. Believe it to be most fervent, most

undeviating, in

F. W.

“I must go, uncertain of my fate; but I shall return hither, or follow

your party, as soon as possible. A word, a look, will be enough to

decide whether I enter your father’s house this evening or never.”

Such a letter was not to be soon recovered from. Half an hour’s

solitude and reflection might have tranquillized her; but the ten

minutes only which now passed before she was interrupted, with all the

restraints of her situation, could do nothing towards tranquillity.

Every moment rather brought fresh agitation. It was overpowering

happiness. And before she was beyond the first stage of full sensation,

Charles, Mary, and Henrietta all came in.

The absolute necessity of seeming like herself produced then an

immediate struggle; but after a while she could do no more. She began

not to understand a word they said, and was obliged to plead

indisposition and excuse herself. They could then see that she looked

very ill, were shocked and concerned, and would not stir without her

for the world. This was dreadful. Would they only have gone away, and

left her in the quiet possession of that room it would have been her

cure; but to have them all standing or waiting around her was

distracting, and in desperation, she said she would go home.

“By all means, my dear,” cried Mrs Musgrove, “go home directly, and

take care of yourself, that you may be fit for the evening. I wish

Sarah was here to doctor you, but I am no doctor myself. Charles, ring

and order a chair. She must not walk.”

But the chair would never do. Worse than all! To lose the possibility

of speaking two words to Captain Wentworth in the course of her quiet,

solitary progress up the town (and she felt almost certain of meeting

him) could not be borne. The chair was earnestly protested against, and

Mrs Musgrove, who thought only of one sort of illness, having assured

herself with some anxiety, that there had been no fall in the case;

that Anne had not at any time lately slipped down, and got a blow on

her head; that she was perfectly convinced of having had no fall; could

part with her cheerfully, and depend on finding her better at night.

Anxious to omit no possible precaution, Anne struggled, and said—

“I am afraid, ma’am, that it is not perfectly understood. Pray be so

good as to mention to the other gentlemen that we hope to see your

whole party this evening. I am afraid there had been some mistake; and

I wish you particularly to assure Captain Harville and Captain

Wentworth, that we hope to see them both.”

“Oh! my dear, it is quite understood, I give you my word. Captain

Harville has no thought but of going.”

“Do you think so? But I am afraid; and I should be so very sorry. Will

you promise me to mention it, when you see them again? You will see

them both this morning, I dare say. Do promise me.”

“To be sure I will, if you wish it. Charles, if you see Captain

Harville anywhere, remember to give Miss Anne’s message. But indeed, my

dear, you need not be uneasy. Captain Harville holds himself quite

engaged, I’ll answer for it; and Captain Wentworth the same, I dare

say.”

Anne could do no more; but her heart prophesied some mischance to damp

the perfection of her felicity. It could not be very lasting, however.

Even if he did not come to Camden Place himself, it would be in her

power to send an intelligible sentence by Captain Harville. Another

momentary vexation occurred. Charles, in his real concern and good

nature, would go home with her; there was no preventing him. This was

almost cruel. But she could not be long ungrateful; he was sacrificing

an engagement at a gunsmith’s, to be of use to her; and she set off

with him, with no feeling but gratitude apparent.

They were on Union Street, when a quicker step behind, a something of

familiar sound, gave her two moments’ preparation for the sight of

Captain Wentworth. He joined them; but, as if irresolute whether to

join or to pass on, said nothing, only looked. Anne could command

herself enough to receive that look, and not repulsively. The cheeks

which had been pale now glowed, and the movements which had hesitated

were decided. He walked by her side. Presently, struck by a sudden

thought, Charles said—

“Captain Wentworth, which way are you going? Only to Gay Street, or

farther up the town?”

“I hardly know,” replied Captain Wentworth, surprised.

“Are you going as high as Belmont? Are you going near Camden Place?

Because, if you are, I shall have no scruple in asking you to take my

place, and give Anne your arm to her father’s door. She is rather done

for this morning, and must not go so far without help, and I ought to

be at that fellow’s in the Market Place. He promised me the sight of a

capital gun he is just going to send off; said he would keep it

unpacked to the last possible moment, that I might see it; and if I do

not turn back now, I have no chance. By his description, a good deal

like the second size double-barrel of mine, which you shot with one day

round Winthrop.”

There could not be an objection. There could be only the most proper

alacrity, a most obliging compliance for public view; and smiles reined

in and spirits dancing in private rapture. In half a minute Charles was

at the bottom of Union Street again, and the other two proceeding

together: and soon words enough had passed between them to decide their

direction towards the comparatively quiet and retired gravel walk,

where the power of conversation would make the present hour a blessing

indeed, and prepare it for all the immortality which the happiest

recollections of their own future lives could bestow. There they

exchanged again those feelings and those promises which had once before

seemed to secure everything, but which had been followed by so many,

many years of division and estrangement. There they returned again into

the past, more exquisitely happy, perhaps, in their re-union, than when

it had been first projected; more tender, more tried, more fixed in a

knowledge of each other’s character, truth, and attachment; more equal

to act, more justified in acting. And there, as they slowly paced the

gradual ascent, heedless of every group around them, seeing neither

sauntering politicians, bustling housekeepers, flirting girls, nor

nursery-maids and children, they could indulge in those retrospections

and acknowledgements, and especially in those explanations of what had

directly preceded the present moment, which were so poignant and so

ceaseless in interest. All the little variations of the last week were

gone through; and of yesterday and to-day there could scarcely be an

end.

She had not mistaken him. Jealousy of Mr Elliot had been the retarding

weight, the doubt, the torment. That had begun to operate in the very

hour of first meeting her in Bath; that had returned, after a short

suspension, to ruin the concert; and that had influenced him in

everything he had said and done, or omitted to say and do, in the last

four-and-twenty hours. It had been gradually yielding to the better

hopes which her looks, or words, or actions occasionally encouraged; it

had been vanquished at last by those sentiments and those tones which

had reached him while she talked with Captain Harville; and under the

irresistible governance of which he had seized a sheet of paper, and

poured out his feelings.

Of what he had then written, nothing was to be retracted or qualified.

He persisted in having loved none but her. She had never been

supplanted. He never even believed himself to see her equal. Thus much

indeed he was obliged to acknowledge: that he had been constant

unconsciously, nay unintentionally; that he had meant to forget her,

and believed it to be done. He had imagined himself indifferent, when

he had only been angry; and he had been unjust to her merits, because

he had been a sufferer from them. Her character was now fixed on his

mind as perfection itself, maintaining the loveliest medium of

fortitude and gentleness; but he was obliged to acknowledge that only

at Uppercross had he learnt to do her justice, and only at Lyme had he

begun to understand himself. At Lyme, he had received lessons of more

than one sort. The passing admiration of Mr Elliot had at least roused

him, and the scenes on the Cobb and at Captain Harville’s had fixed her

superiority.

In his preceding attempts to attach himself to Louisa Musgrove (the

attempts of angry pride), he protested that he had for ever felt it to

be impossible; that he had not cared, could not care, for Louisa;

though till that day, till the leisure for reflection which followed

it, he had not understood the perfect excellence of the mind with which

Louisa’s could so ill bear a comparison, or the perfect unrivalled hold

it possessed over his own. There, he had learnt to distinguish between

the steadiness of principle and the obstinacy of self-will, between the

darings of heedlessness and the resolution of a collected mind. There

he had seen everything to exalt in his estimation the woman he had

lost; and there begun to deplore the pride, the folly, the madness of

resentment, which had kept him from trying to regain her when thrown in

his way.

From that period his penance had become severe. He had no sooner been

free from the horror and remorse attending the first few days of

Louisa’s accident, no sooner begun to feel himself alive again, than he

had begun to feel himself, though alive, not at liberty.

“I found,” said he, “that I was considered by Harville an engaged man!

That neither Harville nor his wife entertained a doubt of our mutual

attachment. I was startled and shocked. To a degree, I could contradict

this instantly; but, when I began to reflect that others might have

felt the same—her own family, nay, perhaps herself—I was no longer at

my own disposal. I was hers in honour if she wished it. I had been

unguarded. I had not thought seriously on this subject before. I had

not considered that my excessive intimacy must have its danger of ill

consequence in many ways; and that I had no right to be trying whether

I could attach myself to either of the girls, at the risk of raising

even an unpleasant report, were there no other ill effects. I had been

grossly wrong, and must abide the consequences.”

He found too late, in short, that he had entangled himself; and that

precisely as he became fully satisfied of his not caring for Louisa at

all, he must regard himself as bound to her, if her sentiments for him

were what the Harvilles supposed. It determined him to leave Lyme, and

await her complete recovery elsewhere. He would gladly weaken, by any

fair means, whatever feelings or speculations concerning him might

exist; and he went, therefore, to his brother’s, meaning after a while

to return to Kellynch, and act as circumstances might require.

“I was six weeks with Edward,” said he, “and saw him happy. I could

have no other pleasure. I deserved none. He enquired after you very

particularly; asked even if you were personally altered, little

suspecting that to my eye you could never alter.”

Anne smiled, and let it pass. It was too pleasing a blunder for a

reproach. It is something for a woman to be assured, in her

eight-and-twentieth year, that she has not lost one charm of earlier

youth; but the value of such homage was inexpressibly increased to

Anne, by comparing it with former words, and feeling it to be the

result, not the cause of a revival of his warm attachment.

He had remained in Shropshire, lamenting the blindness of his own

pride, and the blunders of his own calculations, till at once released

from Louisa by the astonishing and felicitous intelligence of her

engagement with Benwick.

“Here,” said he, “ended the worst of my state; for now I could at least

put myself in the way of happiness; I could exert myself; I could do

something. But to be waiting so long in inaction, and waiting only for

evil, had been dreadful. Within the first five minutes I said, ‘I will

be at Bath on Wednesday,’ and I was. Was it unpardonable to think it

worth my while to come? and to arrive with some degree of hope? You

were single. It was possible that you might retain the feelings of the

past, as I did; and one encouragement happened to be mine. I could

never doubt that you would be loved and sought by others, but I knew to

a certainty that you had refused one man, at least, of better

pretensions than myself; and I could not help often saying, ‘Was this

for me?’”

Their first meeting in Milsom Street afforded much to be said, but the

concert still more. That evening seemed to be made up of exquisite

moments. The moment of her stepping forward in the Octagon Room to

speak to him: the moment of Mr Elliot’s appearing and tearing her away,

and one or two subsequent moments, marked by returning hope or

increasing despondency, were dwelt on with energy.

“To see you,” cried he, “in the midst of those who could not be my

well-wishers; to see your cousin close by you, conversing and smiling,

and feel all the horrible eligibilities and proprieties of the match!

To consider it as the certain wish of every being who could hope to

influence you! Even if your own feelings were reluctant or indifferent,

to consider what powerful supports would be his! Was it not enough to

make the fool of me which I appeared? How could I look on without

agony? Was not the very sight of the friend who sat behind you, was not

the recollection of what had been, the knowledge of her influence, the

indelible, immoveable impression of what persuasion had once done—was

it not all against me?”

“You should have distinguished,” replied Anne. “You should not have

suspected me now; the case is so different, and my age is so different.

If I was wrong in yielding to persuasion once, remember that it was to

persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not of risk. When I yielded,

I thought it was to duty, but no duty could be called in aid here. In

marrying a man indifferent to me, all risk would have been incurred,

and all duty violated.”

“Perhaps I ought to have reasoned thus,” he replied, “but I could not.

I could not derive benefit from the late knowledge I had acquired of

your character. I could not bring it into play; it was overwhelmed,

buried, lost in those earlier feelings which I had been smarting under

year after year. I could think of you only as one who had yielded, who

had given me up, who had been influenced by any one rather than by me.

I saw you with the very person who had guided you in that year of

misery. I had no reason to believe her of less authority now. The force

of habit was to be added.”

“I should have thought,” said Anne, “that my manner to yourself might

have spared you much or all of this.”

“No, no! your manner might be only the ease which your engagement to

another man would give. I left you in this belief; and yet, I was

determined to see you again. My spirits rallied with the morning, and I

felt that I had still a motive for remaining here.”

At last Anne was at home again, and happier than any one in that house

could have conceived. All the surprise and suspense, and every other

painful part of the morning dissipated by this conversation, she

re-entered the house so happy as to be obliged to find an alloy in some

momentary apprehensions of its being impossible to last. An interval of

meditation, serious and grateful, was the best corrective of everything

dangerous in such high-wrought felicity; and she went to her room, and

grew steadfast and fearless in the thankfulness of her enjoyment.

The evening came, the drawing-rooms were lighted up, the company

assembled. It was but a card party, it was but a mixture of those who

had never met before, and those who met too often; a commonplace

business, too numerous for intimacy, too small for variety; but Anne

had never found an evening shorter. Glowing and lovely in sensibility

and happiness, and more generally admired than she thought about or

cared for, she had cheerful or forbearing feelings for every creature

around her. Mr Elliot was there; she avoided, but she could pity him.

The Wallises, she had amusement in understanding them. Lady Dalrymple

and Miss Carteret—they would soon be innoxious cousins to her. She

cared not for Mrs Clay, and had nothing to blush for in the public

manners of her father and sister. With the Musgroves, there was the

happy chat of perfect ease; with Captain Harville, the kind-hearted

intercourse of brother and sister; with Lady Russell, attempts at

conversation, which a delicious consciousness cut short; with Admiral

and Mrs Croft, everything of peculiar cordiality and fervent interest,

which the same consciousness sought to conceal; and with Captain

Wentworth, some moments of communications continually occurring, and

always the hope of more, and always the knowledge of his being there.

It was in one of these short meetings, each apparently occupied in

admiring a fine display of greenhouse plants, that she said—

“I have been thinking over the past, and trying impartially to judge of

the right and wrong, I mean with regard to myself; and I must believe

that I was right, much as I suffered from it, that I was perfectly

right in being guided by the friend whom you will love better than you

do now. To me, she was in the place of a parent. Do not mistake me,

however. I am not saying that she did not err in her advice. It was,

perhaps, one of those cases in which advice is good or bad only as the

event decides; and for myself, I certainly never should, in any

circumstance of tolerable similarity, give such advice. But I mean,

that I was right in submitting to her, and that if I had done

otherwise, I should have suffered more in continuing the engagement

than I did even in giving it up, because I should have suffered in my

conscience. I have now, as far as such a sentiment is allowable in

human nature, nothing to reproach myself with; and if I mistake not, a

strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman’s portion.”

He looked at her, looked at Lady Russell, and looking again at her,

replied, as if in cool deliberation—

“Not yet. But there are hopes of her being forgiven in time. I trust to

being in charity with her soon. But I too have been thinking over the

past, and a question has suggested itself, whether there may not have

been one person more my enemy even than that lady? My own self. Tell me

if, when I returned to England in the year eight, with a few thousand

pounds, and was posted into the Laconia, if I had then written to you,

would you have answered my letter? Would you, in short, have renewed

the engagement then?”

“Would I!” was all her answer; but the accent was decisive enough.

“Good God!” he cried, “you would! It is not that I did not think of it,

or desire it, as what could alone crown all my other success; but I was

proud, too proud to ask again. I did not understand you. I shut my

eyes, and would not understand you, or do you justice. This is a

recollection which ought to make me forgive every one sooner than

myself. Six years of separation and suffering might have been spared.

It is a sort of pain, too, which is new to me. I have been used to the

gratification of believing myself to earn every blessing that I

enjoyed. I have valued myself on honourable toils and just rewards.

Like other great men under reverses,” he added, with a smile. “I must

endeavour to subdue my mind to my fortune. I must learn to brook being

happier than I deserve.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Who can be in doubt of what followed? When any two young people take it

into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to

carry their point, be they ever so poor, or ever so imprudent, or ever

so little likely to be necessary to each other’s ultimate comfort. This

may be bad morality to conclude with, but I believe it to be truth; and

if such parties succeed, how should a Captain Wentworth and an Anne

Elliot, with the advantage of maturity of mind, consciousness of right,

and one independent fortune between them, fail of bearing down every

opposition? They might in fact, have borne down a great deal more than

they met with, for there was little to distress them beyond the want of

graciousness and warmth. Sir Walter made no objection, and Elizabeth

did nothing worse than look cold and unconcerned. Captain Wentworth,

with five-and-twenty thousand pounds, and as high in his profession as

merit and activity could place him, was no longer nobody. He was now

esteemed quite worthy to address the daughter of a foolish, spendthrift

baronet, who had not had principle or sense enough to maintain himself

in the situation in which Providence had placed him, and who could give

his daughter at present but a small part of the share of ten thousand

pounds which must be hers hereafter.

Sir Walter, indeed, though he had no affection for Anne, and no vanity

flattered, to make him really happy on the occasion, was very far from

thinking it a bad match for her. On the contrary, when he saw more of

Captain Wentworth, saw him repeatedly by daylight, and eyed him well,

he was very much struck by his personal claims, and felt that his

superiority of appearance might be not unfairly balanced against her

superiority of rank; and all this, assisted by his well-sounding name,

enabled Sir Walter at last to prepare his pen, with a very good grace,

for the insertion of the marriage in the volume of honour.

The only one among them, whose opposition of feeling could excite any

serious anxiety was Lady Russell. Anne knew that Lady Russell must be

suffering some pain in understanding and relinquishing Mr Elliot, and

be making some struggles to become truly acquainted with, and do

justice to Captain Wentworth. This however was what Lady Russell had

now to do. She must learn to feel that she had been mistaken with

regard to both; that she had been unfairly influenced by appearances in

each; that because Captain Wentworth’s manners had not suited her own

ideas, she had been too quick in suspecting them to indicate a

character of dangerous impetuosity; and that because Mr Elliot’s

manners had precisely pleased her in their propriety and correctness,

their general politeness and suavity, she had been too quick in

receiving them as the certain result of the most correct opinions and

well-regulated mind. There was nothing less for Lady Russell to do,

than to admit that she had been pretty completely wrong, and to take up

a new set of opinions and of hopes.

There is a quickness of perception in some, a nicety in the discernment

of character, a natural penetration, in short, which no experience in

others can equal, and Lady Russell had been less gifted in this part of

understanding than her young friend. But she was a very good woman, and

if her second object was to be sensible and well-judging, her first was

to see Anne happy. She loved Anne better than she loved her own

abilities; and when the awkwardness of the beginning was over, found

little hardship in attaching herself as a mother to the man who was

securing the happiness of her other child.

Of all the family, Mary was probably the one most immediately gratified

by the circumstance. It was creditable to have a sister married, and

she might flatter herself with having been greatly instrumental to the

connexion, by keeping Anne with her in the autumn; and as her own

sister must be better than her husband’s sisters, it was very agreeable

that Captain Wentworth should be a richer man than either Captain

Benwick or Charles Hayter. She had something to suffer, perhaps, when

they came into contact again, in seeing Anne restored to the rights of

seniority, and the mistress of a very pretty landaulette; but she had a

future to look forward to, of powerful consolation. Anne had no

Uppercross Hall before her, no landed estate, no headship of a family;

and if they could but keep Captain Wentworth from being made a baronet,

she would not change situations with Anne.

It would be well for the eldest sister if she were equally satisfied

with her situation, for a change is not very probable there. She had

soon the mortification of seeing Mr Elliot withdraw, and no one of

proper condition has since presented himself to raise even the

unfounded hopes which sunk with him.

The news of his cousin Anne’s engagement burst on Mr Elliot most

unexpectedly. It deranged his best plan of domestic happiness, his best

hope of keeping Sir Walter single by the watchfulness which a

son-in-law’s rights would have given. But, though discomfited and

disappointed, he could still do something for his own interest and his

own enjoyment. He soon quitted Bath; and on Mrs Clay’s quitting it soon

afterwards, and being next heard of as established under his protection

in London, it was evident how double a game he had been playing, and

how determined he was to save himself from being cut out by one artful

woman, at least.

Mrs Clay’s affections had overpowered her interest, and she had

sacrificed, for the young man’s sake, the possibility of scheming

longer for Sir Walter. She has abilities, however, as well as

affections; and it is now a doubtful point whether his cunning, or

hers, may finally carry the day; whether, after preventing her from

being the wife of Sir Walter, he may not be wheedled and caressed at

last into making her the wife of Sir William.

It cannot be doubted that Sir Walter and Elizabeth were shocked and

mortified by the loss of their companion, and the discovery of their

deception in her. They had their great cousins, to be sure, to resort

to for comfort; but they must long feel that to flatter and follow

others, without being flattered and followed in turn, is but a state of

half enjoyment.

Anne, satisfied at a very early period of Lady Russell’s meaning to

love Captain Wentworth as she ought, had no other alloy to the

happiness of her prospects than what arose from the consciousness of

having no relations to bestow on him which a man of sense could value.

There she felt her own inferiority very keenly. The disproportion in

their fortune was nothing; it did not give her a moment’s regret; but

to have no family to receive and estimate him properly, nothing of

respectability, of harmony, of good will to offer in return for all the

worth and all the prompt welcome which met her in his brothers and

sisters, was a source of as lively pain as her mind could well be

sensible of under circumstances of otherwise strong felicity. She had

but two friends in the world to add to his list, Lady Russell and Mrs

Smith. To those, however, he was very well disposed to attach himself.

Lady Russell, in spite of all her former transgressions, he could now

value from his heart. While he was not obliged to say that he believed

her to have been right in originally dividing them, he was ready to say

almost everything else in her favour, and as for Mrs Smith, she had

claims of various kinds to recommend her quickly and permanently.

Her recent good offices by Anne had been enough in themselves, and

their marriage, instead of depriving her of one friend, secured her

two. She was their earliest visitor in their settled life; and Captain

Wentworth, by putting her in the way of recovering her husband’s

property in the West Indies, by writing for her, acting for her, and

seeing her through all the petty difficulties of the case with the

activity and exertion of a fearless man and a determined friend, fully

requited the services which she had rendered, or ever meant to render,

to his wife.

Mrs Smith’s enjoyments were not spoiled by this improvement of income,

with some improvement of health, and the acquisition of such friends to

be often with, for her cheerfulness and mental alacrity did not fail

her; and while these prime supplies of good remained, she might have

bid defiance even to greater accessions of worldly prosperity. She

might have been absolutely rich and perfectly healthy, and yet be

happy. Her spring of felicity was in the glow of her spirits, as her

friend Anne’s was in the warmth of her heart. Anne was tenderness

itself, and she had the full worth of it in Captain Wentworth’s

affection. His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish

that tenderness less, the dread of a future war all that could dim her

sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the

tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if

possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its

national importance.

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